

AFTER AMNESIA

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Tradition and Change
in Indian Literary Criticism

G. N. DEVY



Orient BlackSwan

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For Surekha

A Mahātmā and his wife came along, bringing a *sarivīṇā* with them. They plucked at the string and began to sing a song.

As they began to sing, the Mahātmā sang one *rāga*, his wife sang another *rāga*, and they played the instrument in a third *rāga*.

And the Gosāvī said, “Die, you miserable wretches!”

And they kept silent.

Then the Gosāvī left.

Śrī Govindaprabhu Caritra, AD 1392

The translation from the original Marāṭhī *Mahānubhāva* text is by Anne Feldhaus (*The Deeds of God in Rddhipūr*, 1984). I have taken the liberty to reinstate *sarivīṇā* and *rāga* in the place of ‘a stringed instrument’ and ‘song’ used by her.

Contents

On the Occasion of the Paperback Edition ix

Acknowledgements xi

A Note on Transliteration and Dates xii

Introduction	1
Tradition and Amnesia	6
The Crisis in Literary Criticism	10
Tradition	16
Modern Indian Intellectuals and Western Thought	20
Modern India and the Sanskrit Tradition	27
The Colonial Impact	32
<i>Bhāṣā</i> Literatures and the Modern Attitude	39
Cultural Amnesia	48
A Never-ending Transition	56
Cultural Archaeology	56
A Never-ending Transition	61
The <i>Mārga</i> and the <i>Deśī</i>	78
Devotionalism and Discourse	82
Colonial Structure: The City and the Cantonment	92
The Duality of Law	99
After Amnesia	102
The Tripartite Relation	102
Nativism	119

Epilogue	125
Function of Criticism	125
The Post-Memory Imagination	130
‘All Changed, Changed Utterly’	130
<i>The Mirror and the Lamp</i>	134
‘Phoren Soap’	137
Literature, Intellect and Networks	139
Nation, Language, Aphasia	145
The Millennial Cycle	151
Diversity, Today	152
Falsely Charged as Thieves	155
The Post-Memory Imagination	158

Notes and References 160

Index 175

On the Occasion of the Paperback Edition

This essay has attracted a great deal of attention and, I think, has had a better reception than it deserved. Ever since its publication in August 1992, it is being discussed in newspaper articles, reviews, literary periodicals and seminars. A large number of critics, friends and readers have written to me giving their responses and suggestions. I am fully aware of the inadequacies and gaps in the argument presented in this essay. It will take another essay of a similar length and scale to deal with the arguments arising out of the comments received. It is not possible to incorporate in the present version a 'defence' of *After Amnesia* without losing the concentration of the argument presented in it. Therefore, no major changes have been made in the previous version while preparing it for re-publication. However, I have made some minor corrections pertaining to dates, references, etc. I wish to thank Dr. M. S. Patil, who has translated the essay into Marathi, for pointing out several inaccuracies and errors.

This essay was given the Sahitya Akademi Award for 1993. I thank the Akademi for the award without forgetting, however, that every award does not necessarily indicate excellence.

Baroda
12 September 1994

G N Devy

Acknowledgements

An initial outline of this essay was discussed with the late Professor Suresh Joshi, a few months before his death in September 1986. The first draft was prepared during my tenure as a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow at the University of Leeds between October 1986 and July 1987, and was read by the late Mr. Arthur Ravenscroft (Leeds), and Dr. John Stachniewski (Manchester). Parts of it were read by Dr. Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar (Shivaji University), Dr. Shirley Chew (Leeds University), and Mr. Jyotirmaya Sharma (Hull University). Valuable suggestions were made by Mr. S. K. Rana and Dr. Deval Dharker (University of Baroda) while the typescript was prepared. This work has benefited much by the comments offered by Dr. Sujit Mukherjee. I thank them.

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The basic motivation for this work has come from my former teacher Professor Shantinath Desai, currently the Vice Chancellor of K.V.P. University of Shimoga. I am infinitely grateful to him. I also wish to appreciate the constant support and encouragement that I received from my wife while I was busy writing this essay between April 1986 and March 1989.

G. N. Devy

Transliteration

The standard conventons have been followed for representing long vowels (*ā, ī, ū*) and retroflex consonants (*ṛ, ṭ, ḍ, ṇ*). An interconsonantal *r* represents vocalic *r*. Aspiration is indicated by an *h* following the consonant, whereas *c* represents *ch* or *ś* and *ṣ* represent palatal and retroflex variations of *sh* respectively. An *ṁ* indicates nasalization of the preceding vowel.

Except for the names of persons and places which are used in their Anglicized forms, other names have been transcribed with the necessary diacritic marks.

Dates

The dates or period of an author, or the year of composition of a text, are indicated in parentheses following the first mention of the author or the text concerned. Such chronological information is repeated wherever necessary. However, dates for well-known Western authors and for more recent or contemporary Indian authors have not been given. Where full information is not available, the following notation is used: (u.) = date not known; (b.—) = year of birth; (c.—) = date of composition/publication of the text; (d.—) = year of death of the author concerned.

Introduction

This essay is about literary criticism in contemporary India. It is an attempt to describe what is recognized by common agreement to be a crisis in Indian criticism, and to explain it in historical terms. It does not aim at offering an analysis of theoretical positions in vogue. I believe that it will not be possible to formulate fresh and meaningful questions of a theoretical nature in the context of contemporary Indian literature without having established first the historical parameters of this field of activity. A perspective of literature and literary criticism with a greater self-awareness, a more accurate knowledge of native traditions, and an insight into their modern transformations, are preconditions for initiating relevant and useful debates about the function and practice of literary criticism. That perspective will make it easier for Indian critics to propose theoretical formulations.

It is commonly assumed at present that traditional criticism has been completely displaced by modern Western criticism, which is regarded as a new current in Indian literary and aesthetic sensibility. But did or did not the earlier current leave behind it any silt which modified the new current? Besides, was the old current a single mainstream, or was it made up of several tributaries of which we have lost sight now? Was the displacement of the indigenous by the alien a simple and unified phenomenon? These questions await satisfactory answers. But there is an even greater question which needs to be looked into in order to understand the precise nature of the crisis in Indian criticism. That question relates neither to the Sanskrit tradition of poetics nor to Western literary thought. It relates to literary criticism in the modern Indian languages, or, to use the traditional Indian term, the *bhāṣās*.

Each *bhāṣā* has a tradition of literature which can be described in all fairness as a mature tradition. Some *bhāṣās* like Kannaḍa and Tamiḻ have literary histories of more than a millennium; others,

like Marāṭhī and Gujarāṭī, of seven or eight centuries. The *bhāṣās* were rapidly moving away from Sanskrit poetics, and it was not for several centuries that they were exposed to Western aesthetics. That exposure came in the wake of British colonial experience. But, whereas Marāṭhī literature, for instance, is believed to have made a glorious beginning in the thirteenth century, literary criticism in Marāṭhī is considered to begin with the mid-nineteenth century ‘prefaces’ by Dādobā Pāṇḍurang (1865), Paraśurām Tāntyā Goḍbole (1867) and Mahādev Moreśvar Kuṇṭe (1869).¹ Similarly, in Gujarāṭī the literary tradition is considered to have begun with the lexicography and poetry of Hemacandra (1088–1173), who also wrote distinguished criticism in Sanskrit; but the critical tradition is traced back only up to Navalrām (1836–88) and Govardhanrām (1855–1907).² It is quite inconceivable that the *bhāṣās* produced great literatures for half a millennium or more without developing literary criticism, in however crude a form. Or is it that Indian literary history has been insensitive to that development?³

If a more reliable literary history is to be postulated, a more accurate description of the *bhāṣā* traditions will have to be offered. It will be necessary to examine closely the role played by printing technology in increasing the volume of critical articulation as distinct from its impact on critical sensibility. Similarly, the process of assimilation of Western ‘modernity’ into Indian ‘tradition’—a process which lends every alien intellectual tool a ritual status before internalizing it—calls for careful scrutiny. Naturally, a reorganized historical perspective, if it is sufficiently realistic, will contribute towards evolving a more useful description of literary criticism in India, and rid it of the static images of Western criticism and Sanskrit poetics.

Any discussion of literary criticism—or other forms of literary activity—in modern India involves the use of the terms ‘India’ and the ‘West’. The term ‘India’ may be valid in the pages of an atlas, but as a cultural label it is hopelessly inadequate and simplistic. A product of colonial historiography, the term brings with it a politically coloured self-image and the suggestion of cultural amnesia. It can be said that colonialism gave rise to an equally false image of the West in India, an image that is larger than life, static and apparently invincible. Accordingly, the Indian view of the West has remained fraught with idealization, arbitrary fragmentation and unhistorical reductions.⁴ This disfiguring colonial epistemology

has created false frameworks of cultural values and has stratified knowledge into superior (Western) and inferior (Indian) categories.

An attempt has been made in this essay to establish how these false images can create profoundly mistaken modes of literary criticism. The term 'India' as used within the pages of this essay presupposes no cultural unity or integration of the subcontinent. It is certainly more meaningful to speak in terms of specific linguistic traditions and regions than to speak of an imaginary cultural unit and unity. Instead of using the long and cumbersome expression 'literature in the modern Indian language,' I have used the traditional term *bhāṣā*. Thus, *bhāṣā* literature or *bhāṣā* criticism; but the label merely indicates a manageable group of many different literatures. It should be understood in the same manner as labels like 'European literature' and 'Commonwealth literature'.

In discussing the crisis in contemporary literary criticism in India caused by what has been described here as a lapse in cultural memory, I have drawn illustrations from several *bhāṣās*; but I have depended mainly on Marāṭhī and Gujarātī, the *bhāṣās* I follow, and occasionally on Indian English criticism. There are numerous *bhāṣā* critics who write criticism in English as well. Bilingualism in critical and literary writing has been a traditional feature of Indian culture. It needs to be seen as a matter of cultural strategy of a people brought up on the dialectics of the *mārga* and the *desī*, a great tradition and little traditions, rather than in terms of a superficial linguistic choice. However, the main concern of this essay is *bhāṣā* criticism.

I have made a conscious attempt to minimize, as far as possible, Western paradigms of intellectual enquiry and to draw as much as one can on what could be called, unpretentiously, the modern Indian intellectual discourse. This discourse seems to have been gradually emerging in recent years through the collective effort of intellectuals like M. N. Srinivas (in sociology), Romila Thapar and Ranajit Guha (history), Anil Seal and Partha Chatterjee (political science), Sudhir Kakar (psychology), Ashis Nandy (cultural history and psychology) and Meenakshi Mukherjee and Balchandra Nemade (literary criticism). Though gradually ascendant, it has numerous gaps which make crudeness unavoidable in an argument dependent on it. Yet to lean on it, rather than on the excessively sophisticated but Eurocentric Western theory, seems to me to be a desirable cultural and critical strategy in this essay which views criticisms as a cultural subsystem rather than a web of abstract theoretical constructs.

There is no point in merely running down the Indian tendency to imitate the West. Even the most original of the twentieth century Indian thinkers—Sri Aurobindo, M. N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi—could not escape the impact of Western thought. Cultural forms and intellectual institutions do keep changing continuously, and no post-colonial society can claim to have come unscathed out of the colonial period. The colonial past cannot just be wished away. But it is desirable to question the efficacy of the intellectual tools produced during that past.

Colonial experience releases several conflicting tendencies in the colonized society. One obvious tendency is to imitate the colonizers and to win their approval. But it may also give rise to nationalist feelings and create the tendency to resist the colonial influence. It creates simultaneously a revivalistic romanticism and a hard-headed political pragmatism. This simultaneous release of several conflicting tendencies results in a strange, superficial cultural dynamics. A colonized culture becomes violently progressive and militantly retrogressive, and in consequence tends to remain static. In order to understand this cultural immobilization an appropriate historiography is of prime importance.

A wishful, revivalistic re-creation of history increases the gap between the cultural changes as they are and the modes of intellect used to perceive them. Similarly, an ideological, and arbitrary, conception of the processes of modernization as a unified progression cannot satisfactorily explain intellectual institutions—such as literary criticism—which do not seem to fit into ideological paradigms of tradition or change. The present essay is a modest and tendentious attempt to describe some prominent features of the crisis with reference to literary criticism in India.

Each literature demands its own kind of literary historiography. In India this field has remained almost totally neglected.⁵ A major consequence of this neglect is that the general framework of assumptions about Indian culture and literature postulated by European Indologists like William Jones, Albrecht Weber, George Grierson, Maurice Winternitz⁶ and so on, continues to be in operation. This is not to say that no writing in the area of literary history has been done by Indian scholars. But these writings have retained the general Indological framework, including its basic assumption that the beginning of modern Indian literature is synonymous and synchronous with the British colonial period. Sir William Jones, the

founder of Indology, declared in his ‘Third Anniversary Discourse’ in 1786 that “in all these inquiries concerning the history of India, I shall confine my researches downward to the Mohammedan conquests at the beginning of the eleventh century, but extend them upwards, as high as possible, to the earliest authentic records of the human species.”⁷

Under the influence of this view, classical India became ‘glorious’ and British India became ‘progressive’, but the intervening centuries became, culturally, a period of continuous vulgarization. This methodological convenience has turned into a historiographical convention, and has come to be accepted as an undisputed principle of Indian literary history. Criticism developing from such misleading historiography is naturally ill-equipped to break new theoretical ground. This essay, therefore, moves from a description of the crisis in criticism towards proposing a tentative historiography of Indian criticism.

Tradition and Amnesia

The cultural forms developed in classical India from the third to the tenth centuries started undergoing momentous changes at the beginning of the present millennium. The most fundamental of these was the emergence of new languages—*bhāṣās*—all over the Indian subcontinent. The new *bhāṣās* expressed regional and heterodox aspirations in protest against the hegemony of Sanskrit and the culture developed through that language, *sanskṛiti*. A similar movement occurred in the south with respect to Tamiḻ which, after a continuous history of two thousand years, branched into Telugu (eleventh century). Earlier, Kannaḍa had already become an independent dialect of Tamiḻ (fifth century). Nine hundred years later, Tamiḻ and Kannaḍa jointly gave birth to Malayāḷam (fourteenth century). In the north, the regional dialects known as Apabhramsa asserted themselves as independent languages. Consequently, the Middle Indo-Aryan dialect in the east split into Bāṅglā and Oriyā (tenth century). Subsequently, Bāṅglā gave birth to Assamiyā (thirteenth century). The north-western dialect developed into Kāśmīri (thirteenth century), Sindhī (fifteenth century) and Panjābī (fifteenth century). The western Apabhramsa of Middle Indo-Aryan distributed itself into Hindī (which till the beginning of the nineteenth century existed as several distinct dialects), Gujarātī (eleventh century) and Marāṭhī (eleventh century). The Hindī family of dialects developed autonomy in the fourteenth century. It also interacted with the Islamic languages—Persian, which was spoken in India from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and Arabic, in use from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries—and produced cantonment language, *Urdu (thirteenth century), which later became a great literary language.

* Urdu was developed as a language of military camps of Arabic soldiers in South India, particularly in Gulbarga.

The origin of some of these languages can be traced further back to earlier centuries. We are told that Gujarātī and Marāṭhī, for example, existed in rudimentary forms as found in stray inscriptions and isolated verses dating from the eighth century.¹ Their known literary traditions, however, do not seem to emerge until a century or two after each language assumed a distinct identity. In any case, all *bhāṣās* had become literary languages by the end of the fifteenth century. These literary traditions have survived two phases of prolonged alien rule; and many of them have claims to a large number of great literary works and major authors. The emergence and survival of mature literary traditions in so many languages is the greatest phenomenon in Indian cultural history.

The earliest prose work in Marāṭhī is Mhaibhāṭa's *Līlācaritra* (completed in 1278). The earliest surviving poetic work is Mukundarāja's *Vivekasindhu* (exact date disputed);² Jñānadeva's *Jñāneśvarī* (completed 1290) was the first Marāṭhī classic to be critically acclaimed. The Gujarātī literary tradition was inaugurated by Hemacandra, poet-saint and grammarian, who lived about the mid-twelfth century. At the time these new literary traditions were emerging, literary criticism was already a highly sophisticated and well-developed intellectual discipline in Sanskrit, and to some extent in Tamiḻ. Sanskrit had a rich literary tradition spanning some sixteen centuries—from Vyāsa in the fifth century BC to Bhoja in the eleventh century AD. This great tradition of creative literature had helped Sanskrit criticism in becoming an extremely sophisticated system of literary thought.

Sanskrit grammarians, scholars and writers had thought profoundly about language and linguistics (Pāṇini—fourth century BC; Vararuci—first century AD; Patañjali—second century AD), metrics, style and diction (Vāmana—eighth century; Bhoja—eleventh century), drama, dance and theatre (Bharata—fourth century), metaphor, symbol and diction (Ānandavardhana—eighth century; Abhinavagupta—eleventh century), genre and form (Bhāmaha—fifth (?) century), sociology of literature (Rājaśekhara—tenth century), and so on.³ The thoughts of these critics were expressed methodically and in a manner acceptable to Indian systems of logic, and were preserved through manuscripts. Theory relating to drama and poetry was taught in universities, commented upon by scholars, and considered seriously by philosophers. For instance,

the linguistic theory of *sphoṭa* figured prominently in Śaṅkara's philosophy of Advaita Vedānta in the ninth century. *Sphoṭa*, which means a sudden explosion, was used as a hypothesis by linguists to explain the mechanism which transforms a verbal image into a semantic concept. Śaṅkara adopted this theory of linguistic meaning, and used it to explain his emphasis on *brahman* in the context of the meaning of existence.⁴ Sanskrit critics had a very fine conception of the whole field of literary criticism, which they had divided into several subgenres. Rājaśekhara mentions the following nine types of criticism in his *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*: i) *sūtra*—aphoristic and logically formulated idea in prose; ii) *kārikā*—aphoristic and logically formulated idea in verse; iii) *vyākhyā*—elucidation; iv) *vṛtti*—elucidation and illustration; v) *bhāṣya*—comprehensive summary of a point of view and commentary on it; vi) *ṭikā*—assessment; vii) *mīmāṃsā*—analysis; viii) *saṃikṣā*—review; ix) *śāstra*—theory of literature related to other theories of knowledge.⁵

Hemacandra, the Jain monk who initiated Gujarātī into a poetic traditions, was a poet, lexicographer and theorist. His *Kāvya-nuśāsana* (completed 1140) is considered to be a valuable contribution to Sanskrit poetics. It was written in Sanskrit, and was scholarly more than it was original in thought. The fact that Hemacandra brought the whole tradition of Sanskrit poetics to the threshold of Gujarātī literary tradition is endorsed by his modern commentators. A recent evaluation of Hemacandra states:

His work is perhaps the most eclectic of this period, whose spirit is often dominated by eclecticism. Without committing himself to any doctrine (even the *rasal/dhvani*) Hemacandra succeeds in giving a circumstantial account of the various topics of *alaṃkāraśāstra*, and also of the *nāṭyaśāstra*. His work approaches, in other words, the standards of modern scholarship ... [He] lays himself open to the charge of compilation. In balance though, his net was very broad, especially in the area of illustrative verses (some 1500 from various authors), and he seems to have possessed also a comprehensive skepticism rare among Indian *śāstrīs*.⁶

Like Hemacandra, Mukundarāja, considered to be the first Marāṭhī poet, had an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit intellectual traditions. A critic comments:

... Mukundarāja is the immediate predecessor of Jñānadeva for whom he paved the way by his two works, the *Paramāmṛta* and the *Vivekasindhu*, an exposition of the Vedānta written in the peculiar intellectual style of the Vedāntin. It is strange that Marāṭhī literature should begin where other literatures generally end. But it is a fact, and the reason is the long tradition of the Sanskrit lore that was behind Marāṭhī and which it was trying to rejuvenate after the lapse of Apabhramsa.⁷

Marāṭhī and Gujarātī had the advantage of founding their own literary traditions upon intellectual developments in Sanskrit. Other *bhāṣā* literatures too had the benefit of contact with Sanskrit.

The emergence of *bhāṣā* literatures coincided with, even if it was not entirely caused by, a succession of Islamic rules in India. The Islamic rulers—Arabs, Turks, Mughals—brought with them new cultural currents to India, and provided these currents legitimacy through liberal political patronage. Their languages—Arabic and Persian, mainly, and Urdu which developed indigenously under their influence—brought new modes of writing poetry and music. This intimate contact with Islamic cultures creates for the *bhāṣā* literatures new possibilities of continuous development.

From the middle of the eighteenth century the British followed a policy of active political interference in India. Once political domination was well established, the British rulers decided, during the nineteenth century, that it was their historic duty to educate India. More pragmatic concerns of colonial rule strengthened this faith. The education designed for India by British colonial officers was founded on the British idea of civilizing the less civilized races. As Lord Lawrence put it, “in doing the best we can for the people, we are bound by our conscience and not by theirs.”⁸ A new education system based on and spread through the English language was introduced, and with it was introduced English literature as a civilizing influence. It may be noted in passing that during the Victorian period of British history the British universities themselves did not consider English literature a subject fit for study in civilized institutions of learning. English literature earned that privilege in Britain itself just about half a century back.⁹ In India, however, it was introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century along with industrial products developed through British colonial expansion.

English literary education brought with it new literary models and critical concepts—initially from English, then from the continental languages through the medium of English. They found their way into Indian literature and Indian literary sensibility. To what extent they ‘civilized’ India is difficult to determine. However, it can be said with certainty that the violent intrusion of alien literary pressure produced many undesirable tendencies in *bhāṣā* literature. The most damaging effect of this phenomenon has been a cultural amnesia, which makes the average Indian intellectual incapable of tracing his tradition backwards beyond the mid-nineteenth century. And even when traditions are traced back the sense of discrimination in that act appears to be largely absent.

Colonialism creates a cultural demoralization. It creates a false sense of shame in the minds of the colonized about their own history and traditions. This pattern of influence has deprived Indian critics since the period of High Colonialism in India of a healthy relation with the past of the *bhāṣā* literatures. Trapped between an indiscriminating revival of the past and an uncritical rejection of it, between Sanskrit poetics and Western critical theory, *bhāṣā* criticism today has ceased to be an intellectual ‘discourse’. And as a combined result of amnesia and disorientation, *bhāṣā* literatures, with literary histories ranging from five to ten centuries, seem to suffer damage from what is obviously an acute crisis in Indian literary criticism.

The Crisis in Literary Criticism

Let us list some of the more prominent symptoms of the crisis facing modern Indian literary criticism. They are: a proliferation of non-productive commentaries on Western critical positions and thinkers; lack of initiative in modifying critical concepts, tools and criteria in the process of importation; inappropriate use of critical terminology developed in the West, mostly out of its original context, in an undisciplined way and without sufficient justification to use it; lack of scholarly material to support critical pursuits—want of literary biographies, bibliographies, translations of Indian and foreign works, editorial scholarship and relevant critical debate; inability to relate literature to other arts, the media and social and cultural phenomena; uncritical and uninformed attitudes to influence; absence of self-awareness and of tradition; arbitrary and mostly alien critical standards. These failures may not be peculiar to Indian criticism alone. In a neo-colonial world based on exploitative

political structures and fascist paradigms, the situation may be just about the same in any culture with material disadvantage. Yet, in the Indian context it assumes a special seriousness because here this situation cripples sensibility cultivated through long-standing and rich literary traditions. The somewhat chaotic list of failures in the field of literary criticism given above does not imply any pre-formulated paradigm of literary criticism. Though a prescription to remedy the situation can easily be hazarded from the list, it is not intended to be prescriptive. It is a summary of a vast range of comments made by numerous *bhāṣā* critics in the present century, and merely lists the major themes of self-censure by these critics.

Let us take some example from Marāṭhī and Gujarāṭi literary criticism. In Marāṭhī, the critics who have concerned themselves with the study of literary culture—from the late-nineteenth century critic K. B. Marathe to the contemporary trend-setting novelist Bhalchandra Nemade—have invariably expressed a bitter sense of disappointment at the lack of proper critical standards. In his essay, ‘Concerning the Theatre and the Novel’, K. B. Marathe wrote in 1872, “not even one in a hundred of these writers, is acquainted with the principles and rules.”¹⁰ He then proceeded to formulate the principles of fiction and drama which on his own admission he had borrowed “from the essays of Addison, Scott and Macaulay and ... from the science of *Alaṃkāra*.” This ‘synthesis’ did not help Marāṭhī literary criticism much. And so, in 1902, V. K. Rajawade had to ask, while discussing fiction criticism in Marāṭhī: “What kind of wisdom is it that picks up what the foreign writers say about their own literature and applies it verbatim to our own situation?”¹¹ Eighty years later, Bhalchandra Nemade attributes the state of vitiated literary culture to the mindless fiction criticism in Marāṭhī. In conclusion to a bold and radical revaluation of the novel in Marāṭhī (1980), Nemade states: “Unless the next generation revolutionizes criticism and helps up the sunken literary taste in Marāṭhī the situation is little likely to change.”¹²

It needs to be stated at once that there is no dearth of self-congratulatory evaluations of Indian literary criticism. One comes across samples of this type in census-like surveys of Indian literary achievement. In 1965, Manasukhalal Jhaveri credited some fifteen Gujarāṭi critics with ‘important’ contributions—whose standards “are very high,” for they “refuse to be satisfied with anything less than perfection.”¹³ Similar claims were pressed in a survey of Indian

literature published in 1986.¹⁴ Sahitya Akademi has given the award for literary excellence eight times so far to critical works in Gujarātī. The claims put forward for Marāṭhī achievement in literary criticism by Anant Kanekar in 1965 and Sudhir Rasal in 1980 are no less impressive.¹⁵ Marāṭhī critics also seem to believe, in an inexplicably credulous manner, that Marāṭhī criticism has made an important contribution to the field of general and literary aesthetics.

R. B. Patankar, whose contribution in making recent criticism in Marāṭhī self-conscious activity is significant, has analyzed the development of Marāṭhī literary criticism since 1940 in an extended article (1984). After explicating the basic principles of Aesthetics as a discipline and discussing the logical inconsistencies in the theoretical positions in Marāṭhī criticism, Patankar concludes:

Now that we know something definite about the nature of aesthetics, it should not be difficult for us to see and evaluate what the Marāṭhī critics and aestheticians have been able to do, and what they have not been able to do. Theories of beauty grow in the womb of art traditions, they begin to become explicit in criticism, and if there is a strong intellectual tradition in the community, they can be formulated with logical rigour. If we resist the temptation of indulging in self-glorification and decide to face reality, we shall have to admit that nothing significant has been done in any of the three fields: aesthetics, criticism and creative writing. It is a saddening realization that this all-round poverty is not a recent phenomenon in Maharashtra; it has been there for decades. That there should spring into existence new aesthetic theories in this atmosphere of poverty seems almost impossible. We will have to come to the same conclusion about the disciplines that are given the general name of 'Humanities'. It is only when society is vibrating with life and vigour in all its aspects, traditions and institutions that the possibility is created for the emergence of new theoretical systems. Great problems arise in such a living society; and the traditions in that society throw up men endowed with genius to tackle them. No such problems have arisen in our art-traditions, and we have not produced great geniuses to tackle them.¹⁶

Self-denigration is an element of the Marāṭhī sense of humour; and these comments are likely to mislead a credulous outsider into

believing in Marāṭhī's 'all-round' critical bankruptcy. But, making due allowance for the element of self-censure, it has to be accepted that Patankar's harsh indictment is in consonance with the reality of the predicament.

A similarly harsh, but necessary, indictment of Gujarātī literary criticism is found in Suresh Joshi's contention that the standards applied to literary works in Gujarātī are 'no literary standards', and that "the inhibition ridden society had turned rubbish into art and art into rubbish"¹⁷ in what he saw as an essentially post-cultural era of literature. His *Cintayāmi Mānasa* (1981) was offered the Sahitya Akademi award for 1983. But Joshi turned it down, claiming that his book was no more than a collection of 'stray critical articles'. One tends to agree with Suresh Joshi's views, considering that Gujarātī criticism has not tackled in any disciplined manner even the most basic problem of critical terminology.

The performance in Indian English criticism is no better. The following comment by S. K. Desai made in the preface to the only anthology (at the time of writing this) of theoretical criticism in English by Indians may demonstrate the state of underdevelopment in this area:

... in India there have been no native schools or movements of criticism ... no Indian critic has ever been aware of a modern Indian critical tradition. In a sense, the history of the twentieth century Indian critical theory is nothing but a chain of fresh beginnings. Almost every critic seems to have played the role of a pioneer, the needle of whose compass points towards an unrelated critical tradition distant in time (ancient Indian poetics) or in culture-space (western critical theory). However, there is a common pattern of failures ... and it is this common pattern of failures that underlines the brief 'tradition' of modern Indian criticism.¹⁸

It is possible to go on endlessly in this manner enumerating instances of censure of modern Indian criticism. These instances make it very clear that the claims to great achievement made from time to time need not be considered seriously. If *bhāṣā* criticism has failed, as argued by the critics cited above, what are the critical grounds on which it fails? It is in answering this question that we are required to describe the essential character of the crisis in *bhāṣā* criticism.

One of the first points that is likely to strike even a casual observer of the Indian critical scene is the obsessive interest in theory. Perhaps this interest can be explained with reference to the Indian habit of depending on authority, perhaps it is a genuine capacity to live amidst abstractions. Whatever the reason, it is true that many Indian critics have displayed an uncommon anxiety over the problem of critical theory. Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950)¹⁹ attempted to propose a theory of poetry, while B. S. Mardhekar (1908–56)²⁰ tried to build a theory of aesthetics on the basis of several Western theories belonging to different ages. Patankar laments that contemporary Indian society is incapable of producing a theory.²¹

Scholars of Sanskrit like Krishna Rayan (c.1966), Nagendra (c.1983),²² etc., think that literary theory available in Sanskrit can be applied to modern *bhāṣā* literature. On the other hand, the *dalit* (protest) and *grāmīn* (rural) literary heterodoxy finds the present ‘formalistic’ theory of literature hopelessly outdated. Common to all these critics and their views is the feeling that literary theory in modern India needs major innovations to give it efficacy. No critic finds contemporary critical practice satisfactory; but no critic seems to be hopeful of being able to break through the crisis. The attempts to forge a modern Indian theory have so far depended heavily on existing theories—past (Sanskrit) or present (Western)—often in an indiscriminate manner. For instance, Mardhekar gave as much importance to Aristotle as to Clive Bell. Besides, he also engaged his intellectual energy in correcting Aristotle’s theoretical formulations which had very little relevance to literature produced in Mardhekar’s rapidly changing Bombay of the Quit India years. The Indian obsession with literary theory can be compared, perhaps, with the Indian obsession with worship of a multitude of godheads. R. B. Patankar frequently refers to the writings of Immanuel Kant, Suresh Joshi to those of Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Krishna Rayan to Ānandavardhana, and Nagendra to Bharata. All these writers and critics sharing a common present can nonchalantly refer to so many different traditions and past ages. Rarely does one find instances of systematic efforts at understanding contemporary literature on the basis of knowledge embedded in native literary traditions. Among these exceptions one can count Bhalchandra Nemade and his associates in the Nativistic school of criticism.²³

It is not intended to suggest here that literature has no universal values, or that theories of literature are incapable of making cross-

cultural transitions. But such transitions need to be filtered through a clear awareness of cultural differences in order to be meaningful and useful. Since *bhāṣā* literatures and the various theories forcibly applied to them originate in substantially different cultural contexts, there inevitably exists a gap between them. It would be grossly erroneous to claim, however, that a gap between theory and creative literature did not exist in Sanskrit or Western literature. In fact, commentators of Western criticism like Murrey Krieger read the whole text of Western critical tradition in terms of a succession of such gaps. Krieger describes (1976) the development of Western criticism as a fruit of the incompatibility between the creative writer and the critic, and speaks of “the theoretical impatience that accompanies any major critic as he confronts the complexity of his peculiar experience and its resistance to theoretical universals that are supposed to govern it.”²⁴

But the incompatibility between literature and literary theory in India has a different character. It presents not only philosophic and aesthetic problems but also problems emanating from the politics of culture. The ‘universals’ of literary theory used in India from the mid-nineteenth century have been those postulated in Europe, and more recently in the USA as well, and they have the self-assured Eurocentric assumption of being the only ‘universals’. An awareness of the rift between theory and creative literature (which is characteristic of but not peculiar to the Indian critical scenario) and the inability to mend the breakdown in critical discourse by creating a new and viable critical theory where the present intellectual vacuum exists, constitute the two basic elements of the crisis in Indian literary criticism of this century.

It is the recognition of this crisis that one finds in the themes and tone of self-censure outlined above. Throughout this century the nature of the crisis, its symptoms in the field of practical criticism, and the Indian critics’ sense of exasperation at this cultural condition have remained relatively unchanged. There is little qualitative difference between K. B. Marathe’s contention that Marāṭhī writers were ignorant of literary principles (1872) and R. B. Patankar’s charge that Marāṭhī critics do not understand the basic issues of literary aesthetics (1984). The specific targets of their attacks and the degree of sophistication in their arguments have changed, not the perception of the crisis.

That India has been in its recent past a mere consumer of Western forms of intellectual substance needs almost no saying.

That this importation has had an unhealthy and crippling impact on native creativity in the field of literature and literary criticism, is also a generally recognized fact. The crisis in literary criticism is of as grave a nature as the crises in other fields of intellectual life in India at present. And yet, one likes to ask whether there is not something as much wrong with the contemporary attitudes to Indian culture as there is with the culture itself. The object involved in the crisis is literary criticism. The subject involved in it is the consciousness of the critic who recognizes it as a crisis. In order to investigate the exact site of the crisis, therefore, it would be necessary to review the actual critical practice as well as the nature of the perception of that crisis. This perception, however, is not an isolated awareness of an unrelated phenomenon. It is conditioned by a web of perceptions which define the modern Indian intellectual's self-identity. For instance, it would be possible to conclude on the basis of the comments of self-censure about Indian literary criticism that an unspelt literary idealism is at work behind these comments. The continuous censure presupposes what criticism should be and should not be. An ideal state of criticism in particular and of culture in general seems to be set deep within the Indian consciousness. This idealism remains unspecified so far, mainly because of the uncertain sense of tradition. In order to probe a little further the web of attitudes guiding the general assumptions about literary criticism in the Indian consciousness, it may be useful to discuss in some detail the prevalent attitudes to i) tradition, ii) western thought, iii) Sanskrit literary tradition, iv) the impact of colonialism, and v) the *bhāṣā* literature. Together, they may add to our understanding of the crisis.

Tradition

The English term 'tradition' is often used in informal or semiformal literary discussions in many Indian languages. The formal use of the concept calls for a term derived from Sanskrit, *parampara*, which is now nativized in the *bhāṣās*. Though the two terms are used interchangeably, the underlying conceptual structures are not identical. In fact, they are quite opposite in meaning. The term 'tradition' means, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "handing down, or being handed down," or more specifically, "the body of experience and usages of any branch or school of art or literature, handed down by predecessors and generally followed."

Paramparā, a compound of *param* and *parā*, means “distant, further, enemy, afterwards, beyond, other, stranger, next, yonder, belonging to the other side, second, far off,” or more specifically, “something that is very conspicuous and very remote, almost on the other shore of the current of time, inaccessible.”²⁵

In the sense of *paramparā*, the way to continue tradition is to increase its longevity. The characteristic Indian sense of pride in family and community tradition is of this type. Useful or not, *paramparā* must be of ancient origin, and must be perpetuated by continuous family succession. This sense of tradition as *paramparā* came in direct collision with the Western sense of tradition as *useful* conventions when Lord Dalhousie (Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856) introduced the ‘Doctrine of Lapse’. This ‘Doctrine’ enabled Dalhousie, within specific political contexts, to take possession of the Hindu states whose rulers had failed in providing direct heirs. Under ordinary circumstances these rulers would have adopted a person to succeed to the throne, who then could continue the family *paramparā*. It would be interesting to speculate whether this collision of values was in any way directly responsible for the military conflict of 1857.

The Western concepts of tradition and culture, interrelated through the common underlying idea of ‘growth’, have influenced Indian literary sensibility to a great extent;²⁶ and since 1857 (also the year in which the first three English-type Universities were founded in India) the Western and Sanskrit concepts of tradition have clashed within the Indian consciousness. The entire debate between *sanātana* (or ancient origin) and *nūtana* (of modern origin), which characterized late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cultural life in India, indicates the persistence of this clash. Neither concept seems to have scored a final victory. That is why in discussions related to *bhāṣā* criticism, ‘tradition’ is sometimes used to mean the pre-British heritage and at other times to mean the new beginning made during the British period. In other words the meaning of the concept ‘tradition’ in contemporary *bhāṣā* usage wavers between conformity and change.

The uncertainty of meaning attributed to the concept of tradition, the clash between the traditional and the modern associations of significance related to the concept, and the consequent ambivalence, are important constituents of modern Indian sensibility. However, one should be aware of the dangers involved in the simplification

of this process. The view that modern Indian sensibility is reared on both traditions appears uncontroversial in the light of the known cultural traits of Indian history: eclecticism, multilingualism, multiculturalism, etc. However, the simple dialectical opposition between 'Indian' and 'Western' is too neat to indicate that there is also a conflict and an opposition within the category 'Indian'—between the cultural forces associated with Sanskrit and those associated with the *bhāṣās*.

The traditional sense of *paramparā* in India contains two essential components: *Mārga*—the metropolitan or mainstream tradition, and *Deśī*—regional and subcultural traditions. Indian culture has a very long history of exchange and tension between the two. It would be appropriate to maintain that the addition to this relationship of a 'Western' intellectual tradition extended the relationship, without altering it radically. Thus, the modern Indian sense of 'tradition' should be described as a tripartite relationship involving *deśī-paramparā*, *mārgā-paramparā* and Western tradition, each of which conflicts and collaborates with the remaining two in a variety of ways.

At the time the *bhāṣās* emerged from Middle Indo-Aryan and Tamil, the concepts related to time, language and self underwent fundamental changes. In a cultural movement of turning away from classical formalism, the *bhāṣās* humanized these concepts. The process brought about a conflict between the cosmic and the human, the metaphysical and the aesthetic, and the metropolitan and the vulgar. It was a conflict that involved a clash between an idealistic world-view and a pragmatic world-view.

Conflict between tradition and change, therefore, was not an entirely novel phenomenon when British rule brought Western intellectual traditions to India. The cultural dialectic produced by the juxtaposition of Indian tradition and Western tradition was not entirely unforeseen. It follows, therefore, that Indian culture was better prepared for absorbing the alien impact than is generally acknowledged. This perspective may also help to explain the complex patterns of collaboration and confrontation in India's relationship with the culture that came with British rule.²⁷ A sharp, diametric opposition of a 'Western-Indian' type is, therefore, perhaps more imaginary than real.

The work of sociologists like M. N. Srinivas (1966), Milton Singer (1971) and Edward Shils (1961) has established that the

process of cultural osmosis in Indian society is highly complex.²⁸ Singer's study of a community in Madras, in particular, shows that alien cultural features are accepted by Indian society after a careful process of selection, and by giving these features a traditional appearance. Singer's findings show that there is an inherent talent in Indian society for controlling alien influences and manipulating them to its advantage. In other words, traditional Indian culture shows a remarkable talent for adjusting to new situations on its own terms. The process of such adjustment, or manipulation, does not necessarily involve a clash. It follows, then, that the current debate about tradition versus modernity, which had also occupied much of nineteenth century intellectual life in India, displays but a partial understanding of the processes of social change in the country. The bipolar conflict is perhaps a consequence of the faulty perception of cultural relations, a perception shaped during the colonial period.²⁹ It is now inherited by literary criticism. The discussion about cultural opposition—Indian against Western—in the field of literary criticism is often presented in a highly theatrical manner, making the whole exercise futile and misleading.

Indian critics have frequently tried to juxtapose the conceptual patterns implicit in Sanskrit poetics with those in Western critical theories (Bharata–Aristotle: Katak, 1984; *Hāsyā*–Meredith: G. S. Amur, 1976; *Dhvani*—T. S. Eliot: Krishna Rayan, 1965; *Karuṇa*—Tragedy: R. B. Patankar, 1967, etc.).³⁰ The assumption in these juxtapositions is that the contemporary Indian critic is at a crossroads, and must consciously choose his literary value-scale within the structure of binary opposition. For instance, V. Y. Katak's brilliant essay on the Indian dramatic mode as presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* considers Bharata's theory in the light of Aristotle's theory of drama:

To try to probe the basic conceptual patterns implicit in *Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra* the Aristotelian Poetic is a convenient starting point—a sort of jumping off plank for a risky dive into the *Nāṭyaśāstra*'s dark serene waters. For one thing, the conceptual tools we use today are themselves derived from Western tradition of thought largely initiated by Plato and Aristotle. Again, the Aristotelian Poetic offers a kind of model—in many ways a sharply contrasting formulation in reference to which

those features that are peculiar to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* view could be set off and identified.³¹

With such clarity and lucidity, the critic conducts us through the ‘dark, serene waters’ of Sanskrit dramatics, and leaves us to answer the question: “Could it be ... that our theatre is shuffling between Aristotle and Bharata and is at the crossroads?”

The manner in which Kantak poses the alternatives, Bharata and Aristotle, and suggests this binary opposition as the essence of the predicament of Indian theatre, is closely reminiscent of the nineteenth-century debate about education in which Sanskrit and English were presented as the only alternatives. The same assumption is at the base of the revivalistic trend and the Westernizing trend in modern Indian criticism. These two trends, which are the two most predominant trends in contemporary criticism, assume that critics and writers in *bhāṣā* literatures have easy access to Western and Sanskrit traditions of thought.

Modern Indian Intellectuals and Western Thought

There is a misconception that modern Indian intellectuals have access to Western traditions of thought as a consequence of British education, which was introduced in India in the nineteenth century. There is no doubt that British education delivered knowledge of enormous value, and made familiar many thoughts developed in Europe. But the system did not encourage exchange between traditional Indian knowledge and modern European knowledge, or a synthesis between the two, or even a meaningful participation by Indian intellectuals in European traditions. One of the greatest intellectual stimulations to European scholars during the colonial period came with the discovery of Sanskrit and other Oriental languages. And it was accepted by most of them that Sanskrit had produced a great literature. Yet, when Europe thought of extending its literary horizons in the direction of comparative literature, it scrupulously avoided including Oriental literatures within the scope of the new discipline. Thus, for instance, when Matthew Arnold advocated a comparative perspective, he wished to extend it merely to Continental literatures.³² Given the colonial context, it was natural that Europe decided to seal off Indian literature with the label ‘Orientalism’³³ or ‘Indology’ so that it would not contaminate the purer and culturally superior European literature!

The aim of the British educators of India was purely pragmatic.³⁴ The aim was not to 'educate' Indians so that they became cultural equals of the British. It was to educate Indians just enough to make them 'useful' to the empire. However, the culturally demoralized Indian intellectuals were willing to accept British culture as superior to the decadent Indian culture, and so had no difficulty in embracing the 'fairness' of British education, administration and law. This acceptance led to the belief that European culture was an 'open system', and that participation in it on a basis of mutual exchange was possible if Indian intellectuals met the minimum requirement of excellence. This wishful idea of participation and exchange needs no countering in the light of the continuing and one-sided dependence on Western ideas available to India through the English language.

The continued acceptance of ideas from the West cannot be fully attributed to the intrinsic worth of those ideas. Indians did not start accepting the cultural superiority of Western knowledge *after* examining the intrinsic worth of that knowledge. On the contrary, they started studying Western ideas *because* they had already accepted the superiority of British culture (as much as it was reflected in the life-style of the plundering colonial official). The military and technological superiority of the British had already been accepted, before the English language and British-style education were introduced in India. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Bengali intellectuals in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries pleaded in favour of education through English. Offering India the opportunity to have it was one of the last, not one of the first, acts in securing cultural colonization. An examination of various statements related to the education debate would reveal that the intention to introduce English education in India was not so much to 'civilize' India, as to institutionalize the British view that India was in a bad state of civilization, and to salvage from it some obedient Indians to help run the empire.

Given the exploitative nature of colonial rule, it was natural that the English language should have played an important role in the politically motivated structuring of the fields of knowledge. It is a known socio-linguistic phenomenon that the language variety of a politically dominant minority is treated as superior by the politically dominated majority. Similarly, the 'knowledge'—which includes cultural and technological developments, the world-view, means of controlling nature, etc.—of a ruling minority tends to be accepted

as superior by the majority, even when the kind of knowledge involved is utterly irrelevant to its own needs. It was this kind of political framing of values that Indian literary sensibility had to pass through during the colonial period.

Intellectual traditions are culture-bound. They come into existence because of the specific needs of the society and period that give them birth. When these traditions are transplanted, they tend to lose their authenticity and even their utility. Sudhir Kakar has argued, in his psychoanalytical study of childhood and society in India,³⁵ that many Western paradigms of psychology believed to be universal in application need careful scrutiny and adaptation before they are used in a non-Western cultural context. He clearly shows how different the nature of childhood and upbringing in India is when compared to childhood and upbringing in the West, and establishes the need for a culture-specific psychology:

Because I have lived, worked and been trained in Europe and the United States as well as in India, these 'other' cultures with which I compare India are mainly those of the West. I have, however, been necessarily mindful of the autonomy of each society. It has not been my purpose to evaluate one society, whether Indian or Western, in terms of the other. I have not interpreted a particular psychological trait in members of one society as a neurotic symptom or as an unfortunate deviation from some universal norm incorporated only by the other. I have proceeded, rather, on the assumption that both societies offer distinctive solutions to universal dilemmas, that both (in secular psychological terminology) have specific normative conceptions of what constitutes the 'healthy' personality and of how social relations should be organized to achieve this elusive goal.³⁶

What Kakar says about psychology is, by the same logic, also applicable to literary criticism. And so I further quote his explanation:

The tenets of ego psychology and psychotherapy in the West, for instance, postulate a highly complex personality which constantly works to create a common solution for the strivings of all its psychic sub-structures, a process which demands a maximum of synthesizing and integrating activity on the part of the ego. In India, on the other hand, the ideal of psychological

wholeness or 'maturity' ... is quite compatible with an ego which is relatively passive and less differentiated. Any ideal of psychological maturity which presumes to translate experiences and practices in one society into universal norms for others should give us pause. I am reminded of the Indian fable of six blind men and an elephant in which one man, after touching the animal's tail, sought to impose on the others his absolute conviction that the elephant was a snake.³⁷

This warning should be equally, or even more, valid for literary criticism which has to deal with more tightly organized sets of signs and symbols than psychoanalysis does.

During the colonial period a vast number of literary and critical concepts were accepted by Indian writers and critics, and were assimilated in the educational process, as inherently superior concepts. Once introduced into the educational process, particularly in India where the system is based on a near-blind acceptance of authority, they get transfused from generation to generation. In reality, however, these concepts may simply have been Eurocentric. An instructive example of this damaging process is the concept of epic poetry. The genre is as old in India as it is in Europe. In India it has been more fortunate in finding able theoreticians from the seventh century Daṇḍin to the eleventh century Bhoja who studied in detail its formal and thematic structures. The *Kāvyaḍarśa* and *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* are admirable theoretical formulations on epic.³⁸

The epic developed through Sanskrit as well the *bhāṣās*, and evolved many sub-genres such as *ādikāvya* (literary epic—the *Rāmāyaṇa*), *mahākāvya* (oral epic—the *Mahābhārata*), *sargabandha* (modern epic during the classical period—the *Raghuvamśa*), *campu* (long narrative in mixed verse and prose), *ākhyāna* (character-based narrative), and other regional varieties of heroic narrative of epic magnitude. English education brought with it the epics of Milton, and European epics in English translation. And with these works came the European epic criticism, meagre in comparison with the epic criticism in India, but in a position of advantage under the benediction of colonial education. Familiarity with the European epics was in itself an enriching experience for Indian literature; but European criticism of the epic form of poetry was not necessarily in agreement with the native expectations of an epic. Had Structuralism been the reigning critical fashion during the British

colonial period, perhaps Daṇḍin's fine concept of *sargabandha* as an intricate structure defining its theme would have got a second lease of life. But due to the influence of the insufficiently developed epic criticism of England, Indian cities gradually became less sure of what they had to say of the Indian epics.

The process of intellectual importation in India created an imbalance in cultural trade as well as a rift between knowledge and reality. The blind acceptance of modes of knowledge shaped in a distant island has resulted in a wide variance between life as it is lived and the modes of perception used to study it. Literary criticism is no exception to this anomaly. The concept of modernism offers a good example to illustrate it. 'Modernism', a term used to refer to a more or less specific period of European literature and culture, has acquired stable—though varying, and sometimes conflicting—meaning in Europe. Thus Kafka, Thomas Mann, James Joyce, Andre Gide, and Ernest Hemingway, writers with different individual styles of writing, can all be described as essentially modernist writers. In Indian literature the influence of European modernism has created literary movements which at times can be radically different in character from European modernism. Indian literary criticism, however, does not recognize the need to distinguish between European modernism and its Indian avatar. Since the cross-cultural metamorphosis is not taken into account by literary criticism in India, its expectations from literature are guided by Western fashions. How can an Indian critic brought up on the Derridan sense of difference do justice to literature produced in a society which has never experienced the anxiety resulting from logo-centricism?

Clearly enough, colonial and post-colonial *bhāṣā* criticism has accepted the hierarchic structure of knowledge created during the colonial period for political expediency. Once created, this structure becomes self-supportive. It induces the colonized to follow the path of conformity. It leads the colonizer, on the other hand, to view any departure from his value system as taboo or, worse still, as an anthropological curiosity. As time passes, the conformist colonized subject also starts looking at his own culture without experiencing a sense of organic relationship with it. In 1826 James Mill wrote the following comments in his *History of British India*:

[The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*] describe a series of actions in which a number of men and gods are jointly engaged.

These fictions are not only more extravagant, and unnatural, less correspondent with the physical and moral laws of the universe, but are less ingenious, more monstrous, and have less of any thing that can engage the affection, awaken sympathy, or excite admiration, reverence, or terror, than the poems of any other, even the rudest people with whom our knowledge of the globe has yet brought us acquainted. They are excessively prolix and insipid. They are often, through long passages, trifling and childish to a degree, which those acquainted with only European poetry can hardly conceive. Of the style in which they are composed it is far from too much to say, that all the vices which characterize the style of rude nations, and particularly those of Asia, they exhibit in perfection. Inflation; metaphors perpetual, and these the most violent and strained, often the most unnatural and ridiculous; obscurity; tautology; repetition; verbosity; confusion; incoherence; distinguish the Mahabarat and Ramayan.³⁹

It was but natural that Mill, as an agent of the Empire building process, should maintain such ill-founded views. But if, as a consequence of the influence of the colonial bias, an Indian critic finds himself out of sympathy with the past of Indian literature, the situation needs a radical cure.

The anthropological tone, which, when not aided by compassion reduces living cultures to merely a set of analyzable objects, is overwhelmingly present in most Western responses to India. That tone is a colonial legacy, and can be discerned even in the best intentioned and apparently complimentary statements such as the following one by the Formalist critic Susan Langer. Commenting on the *rasa* theory of drama in her monumental book *Feeling and Form* (1953), Langer writes:

The Hindu critics understand very much better than their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotion in the theatre, which our writers banefully confuse...⁴⁰

Does Langer want to refer to Bharata of the fourth century? Or does she want to refer to Abhinavagupta of the eleventh century? And so which specific theory of the theatre does she want to allude to? The Hindu critics had names, had specific relations with

a dynamic history of one and a half thousand years of literary theory, and they belonged to specific stages in the development of that theory. Langer overlooks all these contextual references, and presents a flat and ahistorical image of 'the Hindu critics'. Such ahistorical images of India created by the West in turn influence India's self-perception.

The fact that fields of knowledge have been politically stratified does not, by itself, create much of a problem in modern Indian criticism. The crisis is created, and perhaps made catastrophic, by the self-perception of modern India through Western registers of cultural thought. Yet, as said before, the idea that Indian intellectuals have 'access' to Western traditions of thought is a romantic delusion. It should be interesting for students of modern Indian culture to speculate if this crisis created by the historical situation is not in some profound way related to the immense popularity of the concept of platonic love in modern India.

Ashis Nandy (1983) has used the metaphor of a man-woman relationship to explain the psychology of colonial confrontation.⁴¹ According to him, in a colonial situation, the colonized culture (represented as female) tries to imitate the colonizing culture (represented as male), and ends up by becoming neither (represented as androgynous). Nandy's metaphor explains to some extent the intellectual 'impotency' of the modern Indian intellectual, particularly in the area of literary criticism. It is not necessary to add that the tendency to imitate Western models is the chief reason for the predicament. Nandy's discussion brings out the non-productive nature of the colonial cultural relationship. What that relationship produces at all is false self-images of the colonized as well as the colonizer. In harbouring the illusion of access to Western thought, the Indian intellectual seeks to endorse his self-image created by the colonial rule, and, thereby, chooses self-deception. Western traditions of thought are not inaccessible in descriptive terms, or in principle; but they remain so in practice, owing to the unequal partnership and the one-sided relationship which survive as colonial legacies.

The Sanskrit play by Kālidāsa (376–454?), *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, which inaugurated the modern phase of the cultural relationship between India and the West through Sir William Jones's translation of it into English (1789), may provide us with an effective metaphor to describe the complexity of India's self-deception. King Duśyanta, the hero of the play, meets Śākuntalā while he is on a hunting

expedition (*mṛgayā*), and marries her secretly. This could be read as an archetypal representation of modern colonization, since it centres round an exploitative relationship. He returns to his kingdom, promising to send for her later—a promise he does not keep. When Śakuntalā arrives in his court, on her own initiative, he fails to recognize her; and she fails to prove her identity, having lost the signet ring given to her by Duśyanta. Thus, Śakuntalā is neither accepted by her husband, nor can she go back to her (foster) father. She has lost the sign of her identity (the ring), the cultural context that gave her significance (her father's hermitage), and the possibility of any relationship. But most important of all, she has lost the right to share a universe of discourse. One may add to this bald summary that Duśyanta's failure to recognize Śakuntalā springs from a curse that makes him lose his memory temporarily. The colonial nature of the initial encounter, the loss of memory and discourse are the elements in the plot of this play that should make it an interesting text for modern analysis. One could speculate why Sir William Jones chose this play, rather than some other, like Sudraka's *Mṛccakaṭika* (a realistic comedy in which the heroine is a strong and active character), to present India's image to the Western world. The West, as well as Westernized Indians, have so far closely collaborated in preserving that image in its most static form. Meanwhile life and literature have moved ahead.

Modern India and the Sanskrit Tradition

The links between modern Indian literature and Sanskrit literary traditions are tenuous. Among the causes responsible for their being so are: i) the inner weakness of Sanskrit literary tradition, ii) repeated waves of foreign influence and colonial rule that provided non-Sanskrit literature with official patronage, iii) continuous social transformation and growing linguistic heterodoxy, and iv) centuries of deliberate neglect. Sanskrit literary and critical traditions are accessible to the modern intellectual only as imaginary possessions. The modern Indian critic *can* say that India *had* a glorious tradition of literary criticism a thousand years ago. But, having said this, he is unable to use this tradition as a living tradition which shares a frame of reference within which his normal intellectual activity takes place. In other words, the possibility of projecting the past into the present, and often projecting the past into the present, and often projecting the present into the past, still exists for modern

Indian intellectuals, but no organic connection exists between the past and the present.

In an excellently documented study of Indian attitudes to the past, Madhav Deshpande (c.1979) has shown that imagining an archaic benefaction for things of recent origin is an essential part of the Indian epistemology of time. This argument is supported by sociological researches in recent years by Milton Singer, to which a reference was made earlier. The essence of Deshpande's argument lies in the following passage:

The most important part of this hierarchy of authority is the assumption of lost Vedic texts and law-texts to practices of later times which are not contrary to the older authority. This presents to us very different conception of history. A modern researcher looks at the Vedic texts and says that certain things existed in Vedic times since they are mentioned in Vedic texts. However, as far as the things which exist now and are not mentioned in the Vedic texts are concerned, a modern historian cannot say that those things also existed in Vedic times. However, the classical Indian tradition used a device like 'the benefit of doubt' to project the present in the past. The Vedic Aryans were supposed to have behaved exactly like their mediaeval and modern Indian successors. Justification for the present was sought in the past, but in this process, often an imaginary past was built to justify a concrete present.⁴²

This appears to be a fairly accurate description of the general Indian attitude to history and time, though it may be possible to show several variations on it in different periods and among different religious groups and sects. In the field of literary criticism the tendency to provide every new technique with an archaic past is seen actively at work in twentieth century India. During the present century Indian criticism has witnessed innumerable attempts to prove the greatness of Sanskrit critics have been able to think only in modern times. Among those who have made such attempts are some of India's most gifted critics: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), G. S. Amur (c.1976), Krishna Rayan (1966) and K. Krishnamoorthy (1969). However, since the past is creatively interpreted, or intentionally falsified, it does not correspond with the past as it really was. That past has ceased to be a part of the

present perception of the past. The relation with it is romantic, and thrives on fantasy.

On the other hand, the misconception about the complete inertia of Sanskrit intellectual tradition, poetics included, is an indological product. There is, of course, no possibility whatsoever of that tradition being recycled into a system of living and vigorous thought. But, at the same time, it is necessary to accept that it is historically inaccurate to maintain with Indology that Sanskrit intellectual traditions were abstract and static suspensions in Oriental cultural space. It was such a view that Sir William Jones had intended to present in his famous lectures on Hindu culture. In a 'Discourse' delivered before the Asiatic Society at Calcutta in 1786, Jones announced that in his project of ransacking Indian history he would go to remote antiquity but restrict his researches downwards only up to the eleventh century.⁴³ He thus introduced a scholarly breach between ancient Indian culture and medieval Indian culture. After Jones, every Indological enterprise has invariably sought to make this historical distinction by which ancient India is isolated as the repository of a 'pure' cultural condition of Hinduism.⁴⁴

The Indological view of India was expressed through scholarly works; but the perspective it presented had other ingredients in it than mere disinterested scholarship. It had received more from its immediate political and social context than it was prepared to show. V. G. Kiernan and Edward Said have demonstrated that even the apparently non-political academic projects related to the Orient had, during the colonial period, strong political motives.⁴⁵ Western responses to India display in ample degree a sense of bewilderment while encountering a culture like India's. When young Macaulay arrived in Calcutta he felt that the book in his hand was fast turning into a disintegrating object.⁴⁶ A century later, Thomas Mann in his *Death in Venice* depicts the Gangetic plains crowded with tigers! The sense of bewilderment, the subsequent lack of organized comprehension, and the tendency to project the exotic Orient as panacea for Europe's spiritual problems (as in T. S. Eliot's simple use of 'Shanti' to conclude his *Wasteland*), are the other constituents in Europe's responses to India.

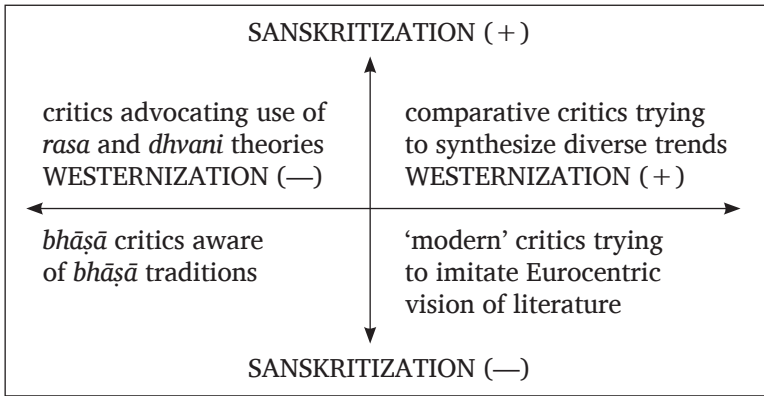
European scholars have done remarkable work in the areas of Indian history and culture. And it is true that modern Indian scholarship owes a debt of gratitude to Indology. Yet, the attitude to history implicit in Indological works ranging from Halhed's

Grammar of Bengali (1780) to Max Müller's *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (1882), considers the Indian heritage as a once glorious but now decadent force. It refuses to see any connection between ancient India and modern India, and tends to study cultural phenomena at museum pieces removed from the current of history. It romanticizes the past, and views it from an entirely ahistorical perspective. Such a perspective, because it was presented by European scholars, has seriously impaired India's own attitude to its past. A similar attitude is implied in Europe's non-schoarly response to India, from Goethe's spontaneous reception of Kalidasa's *Śākuntala* (in translation, 1791) to Arthur Koestler's disenchantment with yoga (*Lotus and Robot*, 1967—banned in India).

What is difficult to understand is how India's self-knowledge was so readily and radically affected by an alien intellectual influence. Apparently, Indology ought not to have been in a position to exert so powerful an influence, for in the debate on education the Indologists (known at that time as the Orientalists) had lost to the Anglicists. The official education policy of the British in India encouraged Anglicism in preference to Orientalism. Therefore the pressure to imitate Indological attitudes was not so powerful. It came, however, from within Indian culture. Acceptance of alien influences is dictated by the inner dynamics of a culture as much as it is guided by forces operating on it from outside. As such, not everything British was accepted by India. For instance, though the British military organization and cricket were accepted from the British, their music and Christian religion were not accepted. Acceptance of the Indological perspective of history was made possible, therefore, by some element within Indian culture itself.

The attitude that the past was all glory in contrast to the stark present fitted well the traditional Indian view of time progression as maintained by the *sāṃkhya* school of Indian philosophy.⁴⁷ *Sāṃkhya* considers human evolution as a movement from the Golden Age to an age of disintegration, from *satyayuga* to *kaliyuga*. That this view was a mere fantasy, that Indian traditions had not weakened much when Indology made its first appearance, is ironically evident in the fact that Indology was easily assimilated into the Indian tradition, the tradition of believing in a steady cultural decline. Nonetheless, the acceptance of an eccentric view of Indian history by a society which in fact had been moving away from its old idealistic world-view to a pragmatic world-view created a further inflection in its self-image.

I have argued so far that modern Indian cities delude themselves into believing that they have access to Western traditions of thought, whereas in reality what they have is but a two-dimensional 'virtual' relationship with those traditions. The relationship is both hierarchic (in which the Indian critics have to take a lower place) as well as one-sided. On the other hand, their links with the Sanskrit intellectual heritage are weak; but while they believe in its complete decline, they may be continuing some of it unknowingly. A diagram of these two attitudes is given below.



The diagram will suggest that though the tendency to draw on Western criticism and Sanskrit poetics, together or separately, is widespread at present, it does not exhaust the possibilities of modern Indian criticism. The diagram indicates a general distribution of trends in the field of literary criticism with respect to the sense of tradition. Since the terms 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' have been used here, it is necessary to clarify that they are *not* used in the sense given them by the sociologist M. N. Srinivas.⁴⁸ In Srinivas's use 'Sanskritization' refers to the social mobility created by internal forces in Indian society, and 'Westernization' refers to that created by external forces. These sociological connotations have been avoided here. In the context of literary criticism 'Sanskritization' should indicate the tendency to return to, or to revive, Sanskrit poetics, and 'Westernization' should mean the tendency to imitate, or to draw upon, Western criticism.

The diagram shows that there is a section of Indian critics which believes that it is possible to meet the present literary-

critical needs by following exclusively either Western criticism or Sanskrit criticism. There is another section which believes that it is possible to meet the needs by combining the two trends. Most of the influential scholarly work seems to point in the direction of the last choice, that of 'synthesizing' West and East, and is exemplified in *Indianism and the Indian Synthesis* (1962) by Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *The Hindu Society at Crossroads* (1961) by K. M. Panikkar and *Common Indian Poetics* (1984) edited by C. D. Narasimhaiah. Ananda Coomaraswamy's *The Dance of Shiva* (1948) is, of course, the classic example of the tortuous logic in such a 'synthetic' argument. I have argued that it is unprofitable for Indian critics to relate themselves to either the Western or the Sanskrit tradition of criticism, or to any kind of combination of the two. These wild cravings for distant traditions need to be moderated by an awareness of the *bhāṣā* traditions; critics should learn to confine themselves to traditions closer at hand if criticism is to break through the present crisis.

The Colonial Impact

One of the interesting paradoxes in modern India's self-awareness is that it accepts Western intellectual influence as a useful impetus to modernization of Indian culture, but rejects Western colonialism as pernicious. It is worth speculating whether there was nothing common between the culture that produced English literature and the culture that produced the colonial plunderers. Apparently, of course, there is nothing that connects figures like Lord Dalhousie and Lord Tennyson, or Rowlatt (famous for his draconian attitude towards the Indian press) and Ruskin. But at a deeper level there must be some connection in the cultures that produced them.⁴⁹ In the Indian imagination, however, the two are completely separated. Western creative literature, and creative expression in general, is seen as progressive, liberal and 'good'; the political attitudes are seen as imperialistic and 'evil'. Correspondingly, all progressive developments in Indian literature are attributed to the influence of Western literature, and all failures are attributed to the colonial influence. That this differentiation is arbitrary is pointed out by M. D. Hatkananglekar in a recent study (1986) of the Western influence on Marāṭhī literature from 1950 to 1975.

Hatkananglekar opens his argument by referring to the hopes expressed by B. S. Mardhekar, the central figure in twentieth

century Marāṭhī literary development. In 1941, Mardhekar had said, provocatively, that self-reliance of Marāṭhī literature could not be thought of before it imbibed enough from Western literature. Hatkananglekar alludes to this sentiment of Mardhekar expressed half a century ago, and shows its futility by analyzing the consequences of the Western impact on Marāṭhī literature. He maintains that the impact has been so intimidating that Marāṭhī literature has become incapable of transforming it creatively. He finds that the influence hinders its creative use. His study supports my observation that it is erroneous to imagine a distinction between Western influence and the colonial impact. It is wrong to regard the two as opposites.

Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835) offers a classic case of the argument which combines advocacy of Western literary influence on the Indian sensibility with advocacy of colonial coercion. While it is true that the Minute has become a convenient target for any attack on cultural colonization (and such attacks are often merely sensational), it is still worth quoting from it to see the combination of piety and vulgarity in it:

I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia...I have certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgement used at preparatory school in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same ... It is said that Sanskrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly, it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant, but

neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature includes the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that neutrality which ought, as we shall agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions ... I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books, I would abolish the Madrassa and the Sanskrit college at Calcutta.⁵¹

The attitude towards Indian literature and culture explicit in these statements has been too frequently commented upon. With minor variations, it makes its appearance throughout the colonial period. Just as it shaped the British policy of education in India, it also shaped the Western view of Indian literature. In spite of British contact with India for nearly two centuries, the impression about Indian literature, even among well-educated Britishers, is that Indian literature is written mainly in English! The vulgarity of views about Indian literature in Macaulay's colonial perspective is a common element in the modern (and 'progressive') West's general response to India. In other words, the colonizing West and the creative West have many interior connections.

Historians of modern India have discussed in detail the development of the British education system in India, and have studied its post-independence transformations and subversions. A student of modern Indian culture, therefore, is well acquainted with the physical aspects of this high cultural drama. The works particularly by Arthur Mayhew (1926), J. P. Naik (1965) and R. K. Mookherjee (1967)⁵² provide a clear perspective on the Indian tradition of education, the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists, the gradual takeover of education by the British government in India from its traditional custodians and Christian missionaries, the disproportionate emphasis on insular British standards, the encouragement given to adopting the facile aspects of English social manners, and a continuous demoralization of native social and literary values. What has not received enough attention so far, however, is the nature of the cross-cultural transformation of the so-called 'British education' after it was introduced in India,

or even during the process of introduction itself. That the system of education introduced by the colonial British was by no means a monolith is generally overlooked by its critics. The 'system' was introduced in small portions, after much hesitation on the part of the rulers; and all that was introduced under its name was not of one vintage. The sociology of education on the 'Anglo-Indian' side had diverse cultural and ideological strands. Some of those who taught in India were Irish, others Scottish, and some others Australian, though Indians themselves outnumbered foreigners in teaching. Educational institutions were run by a variety of religious denominations, often at cross-purposes with the colonial government. On the Indian side, the response to the 'system' was by no means uniform. It differed from region to region, and from community to community. Similarly, the impact of this new education was not felt equally all over the subcontinent. The divide in the impact can be seen not only in the obvious terms of 'main centres' and 'hinterlands', but also in terms of individual *bhāṣā* cultures. Besides, the education given to India was not exactly the education given in the schools and universities in Britain at that time. This last point needs some elaboration.

During the initial phases of colonial rule the British believed they needed to change the prevalent modes of education for administrative purposes. It is worth noting that while in Bengal there was considerable Indian support for the new policy, in Maharashtra the idea of education through English was not well received. Even an advocate of elitist education like Sir Thomas Munro (1761–1827) had to concede, in his *Minute on Education* (1826), that the standard of schools in the Bombay area was "higher than in most European countries at no very distant date".⁵³ He had counted 12,498 such schools imparting education through Marāṭhī and Gujarātī, an average of one school for every 500 people. Hence, he decided not to recommend "any interference whatever in the native school". Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859), unlike Munro, was himself an advocate of education through the mother tongue. So long as education in British India was treated as a state affair and was not centralized, Elphinstone had enough freedom to implement his ideas in the Bombay presidency. So, in spite of opposition from his own Council, and indifference from the East India Company's Board of Directors, Elphinstone decided to emphasize primary education as a priority. He also made the use of the regional language for education an important part of his

policy. His views, and the willing reception of those views in the Bombay region, made Lord Auckland modify (1839) Macaulay's policy (1835) in favour of vernacular education. Similarly, the Rev. J. Wilson, who became Vice Chancellor of Bombay University in 1868, was a consistent champion of education through people's languages. The attitude that the colonial administration adopted in the Bombay region was a result of its knowledge, of the region and of the sentiment of people in it.

As against Maharashtra, Bengal was a willing participant in the Anglicization of education. There, the colonial administrators as well as the 'intellectuals', described by the term *bhadraloka* (gentlemen),⁵⁴ advocated the use of the English medium in schools and colleges. The Hindu College, with which the names of David Hare (1775–1842), Henry Derozio (1810–34) and Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) are associated, was established in 1817. By 1842, the year in which its founder, David Hare, died, it had enlisted, we are told, as many as 10,000 students for degree courses.⁵⁵

In considering the influence of the colonial education system in India it is necessary to accept that the system suggested by Macaulay, and modified several times by his successors, was far from being an exact replica of the education system in Britain during the corresponding period. It was a system devised by administrators, and conditioned by a 'cantonment psychology', which had its own unique tensions, cross-currents and motivations. Moreover, Indian culture during the nineteenth century was not 'static', though that is the image of the period generally accepted.⁵⁶ It is difficult to see how Indian society in the nineteenth century could be static if it had moved from the mediaeval political ideology of Rāghobādādā Peshwā (late eighteenth century) to the nationalistic philosophy of the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885). In fact, it would be quite appropriate to consider nineteenth century Indian culture as a dynamic culture, which witnessed and survived unprecedented cultural catastrophes, and underwent an amazing metamorphosis in the process. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that Macaulay's system did not directly impose undiluted British culture upon India. The framework within which the influence was exerted was created by regional and social conditions, and by specific economic realities. The whole process had a highly complex interface determined by conflicting traits and political motives of both the colonized and the colonizers.

The difficulty in understanding the nature of the colonial impact arises from the absence of appropriate paradigms for studying cross-cultural influences. In India no theory of cultural influence has so far been evolved, apart from Nandy's somewhat speculative paradigm of the sexual relationship as a metaphor for colonial relations. It does not enable us to proceed beyond a primary, though important, insight in this area. The Western theories, such as Harold Bloom's theory of literary influence (*Anxiety of Influence*, 1972), or Max Weber's theory of social change ('Civilizational dynamics in traditional society', 1958), are designed to work within the framework of a direct temporal progression. This temporal scheme creates special problems while using the theories for analyzing the British impact on India or the social changes taking place due to that impact. In order to explain the nature of this difficulty, it is necessary to use the term 'Renaissance', which is generally (and in a misleading way) used for a part of the British period in Indian history, roughly 1800 to 1920, or from Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) to Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). It is ironical that the so-called Indian 're-awakening' or new 'self-discovery' should have coincided with the Indian experience of British colonialism. The Renaissance in Britain had chronologically followed the alien, Norman, rule, whereas the Indian Renaissance and colonial rule were concurrent. Colonialism had taken away cultural freedom during the period of Indian Renaissance, while the Renaissance was opening up new possibilities of freedom within the context of colonialism. They negated each other perfectly, and made the situation culturally non-productive. It is no surprise, then, that not a single major critical text was produced during the entire nineteenth century in India. This is, however, not to say that the society did not move at all during this period. As argued earlier, the nineteenth century was indeed a dynamic period in Indian history. But the nature of that dynamism was such that it could not result in any great creativity. The complexity of social dynamism, which combined non-progression within an overall context of metamorphosis,⁵⁷ makes temporally-based Western theories of influence inadequate for interpreting the colonial situation in India.

A serious misconception of the colonial influence lies behind the view that the British period is a watershed in Indian cultural history. This exaggerated view of the colonial impact has given rise to two antithetical beliefs: that the colonial encounter has produced in Indian culture all that is modern and progressive, and that it

has taken away all that was sacred and valuable in Indian culture. The colonial rule is believed to have ushered in a golden (modern) age, or to have ended an already existing golden (traditional) age in Indian history. Either way, undue importance is attached to the colonial rule. Therefore, a statement like Macaulay's is seen as marking a great historical moment in India's history, a moment either of 'fall' or, alternately, of 'emancipation'. These immodest views show a perception of history which is far removed from the historic reality.

Percival Spear, the historian, maintains that there was a direct historical continuity between the age of Akbar (1542–1605) and the age of Gandhi (1869–1948). Indian literary criticism has not as yet explored the possibility of using this argument, nor examined its validity for literary criticism. If literary criticism is considered a subsystem of culture, and not an autonomous system of thought, its correspondence with other subsystems of culture cannot be negligible. In the introduction to his history of India, Spear writes:

[In this history] the Mughal and British periods have been taken together because much misunderstanding has been caused in the past by their separate treatment. A concentration on the British period presents Indian regimes and institutions only in decay, leading easily to the assumption that this was the state they were in. Placing the Mughal period beside the British reveals to the reader that India had its going political concerns as viable as those of British in India. In addition to this consideration, there is an organic connection between the two which separate treatment misses ... and it is certain that British India would have been a very different place had the Mughals never ruled before them.⁵⁸

It would seem to follow from this testimony of a historian that in literary history the colonial period would be better understood if treated in continuation of the *bhāṣā* past. Modern literary criticism in India has blown up the importance of the colonial period to such a magnitude their critics have been viewing it as an altogether fresh beginning rather than as an interlude in literary history. What colonial rule brought to Indian criticism is substantial by any standard. But its substance is exaggerated by confusing the impact of printing technology with the impact of colonial rule.

Just as it is historically inaccurate to maintain that the modern period in Indian literature is unrelated to its precursors, so it is to maintain that the past of the *bhāṣā* literatures is relatively more static (or less dynamic?) than the colonial period. It is necessary to break the entire history of each *bhāṣā* literature into several shorter periods, and to view each as a cumulative product of all preceding periods, but modified by contemporary forces. Similarly, it is necessary to regard the colonial period as a succession of brief phases, each with its own cultural complexion. The whole span of British rule, from about 1800 to 1947, does not show a single, consistent and linear graph of literary influence. Influenced by a variety of forces—liberalism, nationalism, modernism, industrialization, urbanization, revivalism, etc.—it shows constant fluctuations.

Anil Seal (1962) and John Gallagher (1982), in probing studies of the political development of the raj, have argued that the Empire did not constitute a steady growth, that it can be understood better if seen in terms of several shorter spans, each of which shows changing patterns of both collaboration and confrontation.⁵⁹ A close scrutiny of literature belonging to that period would reveal that the colonial impact on literature was not a uniform and unidirectional body of influence trying to force itself into the Indian literary sensibility. Bhalchandra Nemade has demonstrated that the influence was fragmented into a variety of trends in the Marāṭhī novel. It might even profit us to speak of colonial ‘influences’. At present Western influences are separated in an arbitrary manner from colonial influences, and the entire colonial period is seen as a single unit of literary history. It would be an appropriate historiographic strategy to regard colonial influences and Western influences as interdependent, and to perceive the colonial period as a sequence of phases.

Bhāṣā Literatures and the Modern Attitude

Though a common expression, ‘pre-British past’, is sometimes used to indicate the period between the emergence of the *bhāṣās* and their subsequent domination by English literary influence, the period is not of equal length for all of them. There is such a wide variety of chronology involved here that any common historiography is likely to be immediately frustrated. It may be useful to glance over the relevant dates that mark the period for each *bhāṣā*. In the table below are given dates of the earliest known author or text of merit, dates when printed works were becoming available in the language, and

dates of the first novel in each language. The dates of the first novels are selected only as a mean of arriving at a common structure, and not as an indication of modernization of literature. The two need not be confused.⁶⁰

Language	Literary beginning	Colonial impact
Assamīyā	AD 1300, Hemasarswatī, <i>Pralhādacaritra</i>	Printing: 1838 Novel: 1894, Rajanikānta Bārdāloi's <i>Mirijāri</i>
Bānglā	eighth century, <i>caryās</i>	Printing: 1800 Novel: 1865, Bankim Candra's <i>Durgesnandini</i> Nobel Prize, Tagore: 1913
Gujarātī	eleventh century, Hemacandra	Printing: 1800 Novel: 1866, Nandakiśor Mehtā's <i>Karaṇ Ghelo</i>
Hindi	(early forms) fourteenth century, Kabīr	Printing: 1800 Novel in Bengal 1836–8 elsewhere Novel: 1870, Govindanārāyaṇa Misra's <i>Devrānī Jeṭhānī ki Kahānī</i>
Kannaḍa	ninth century, <i>Kavirājamārga</i> (critical text)	Printing: 1566 in Goa but used after 1774 Novel: 1899, Gulbaḍi Venkaṭa Rao's <i>Indirā Devī</i>
Kāśmīrī	AD 1200, Sitākanta Ācārya's <i>Mahāyāṇaparakāśā</i> with parts in Kāśmīrī	Printing: 1819 Novel: 1950, Amin Kamil's <i>Gati Mabi Gash</i>
Malayāḷam	fifteenth century, Cerusseri's <i>Kṛṣṇagāṭha</i>	Printing: 1713 Novel: 1887, T. M. Appu Netungati's <i>Kundalatā</i>

Language	Literary beginning	Colonial impact
Marāṭhī	thirteenth century, Mukundarāja	Printing: 1775 Novel: 1857, Bābā Padmanji's <i>Yamunāparyātan</i>
Oriyā	fourteenth century Saraladāsa	Printing: 1775 Novel: 1901, Fakir Mohan Senāpati's <i>Cca Mana Athā Gunhā</i>
Panjābī	1538: Guru Nānak's <i>Gurugrantha</i>	Printing: date not known Novel: 1898, Bhāi Vir Singh's <i>Sundari</i>
Sindhī	seventeenth century, Shāh Abdul Latif (1689–1782)	Printing: date not known Novel: 1890, Karamānanda Mevārām's <i>Zinat</i>
Tamīḷ	1000 BC, <i>Sangam</i> poetry	Printing: 1710 Novel: 1896, Rajan Aiyar's <i>Kamalābāi Caritram</i>
Telugu	1020 BC, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's <i>Mahābhārata</i>	Printing: 1796 Novel: 1872, Narahari Gopālkrṣṇa Cetti's <i>Sri Rangarāju Caritā</i>
Uurdu	Amir Khosrau (1253–1325)	Printing: 1875 Novel: 1878, Ratna-nāth Sarsar's <i>Fasana-e-Āzād</i>

These bare chronological details show that the beginnings of various *bhāṣā* literatures vary from 1000 BC (Tamiḷ) to the seventeenth century (Sindhī). They also raise a doubt about the relation between technology and modernization, between printing and changes in literary forms. They show that the introduction of printing technology did not bring with it an immediate or an inevitable acceptance of Western forms of literature. In Urdu the gap between the introduction of printing technology and the publication

of the first novel is just three years, in Kannaḍa it is three hundred and thirty-three years. In Marāṭhī the first novel appears a century before the first novel in Kāṣmīrī appears. Can we, then, set any mechanical equations between the introduction of printing and the beginning of modern literature in any Indian language? Clearly not. Similarly, any mechanical equation between the emergence of the novel and the beginning of the modern period will prove too rigid to be acceptable. The most important observation that can be made on the basis of the above table, however, is that the beginning of modern literature in each *bhāṣā* is a result of the indigenous dynamics of that *bhāṣā* rather than a product of the exogenous cultural pressures. In other words, though the impact of British literature on Indian literature is not quite insignificant, the *bhāṣā* seem to have their own continuous histories, guided by their own inner dynamics.

Literary criticism and literary history in India have been insensitive to the conclusions that can be drawn from a comparative perspective of *bhāṣā* literatures. In fact a comparative and historical perspective in itself can offer several useful starting points for postulating isolated strands of a theoretical nature about literature in the *bhāṣās*, which can eventually be gathered into an Indian theory of literature. A blind acceptance of the cliché that Indian culture is eclectic, and the belief that the British came, were seen and immediately accepted, are detrimental to the theory as well as history of literature in India.

It is necessary to remind ourselves that much of the literature of the pre-British *bhāṣā* period is still a living heritage in India. The poetry of Nāmadeva (1270–1350) and Tukārām (1598–1650) in Marāṭhī, that of Narasiṃh Mehtā (1408–80) and Akhā (1615–1674) in Gujarātī, of Kabīr (1440–1518) and Sūrdās (1483–1567) in Hindī, of Guru Nānak (1469–1539) in Panjābī, and so on, have formed an inalienable part of the Indian consciousness. Tukārām, Mīrā, Kabīr and Basaveśwar, among others, have been some of the dream-images of India's cultural unconscious. They still guide the hands of modern poets like Arun Kolatkar, A. K. Ramanujan and Gajanan Mahadev Muktibodh. Yet, the cultural amnesia from which the modern Indian intellectual suffers, creates highly confused attitudes to the period—or periods—of these poets. The common term used to describe the above named pre-British poets in *bhakti*, devotionism, or saint poetry. The term covers a vast period extending from the last part of the thirteenth century (Jñānadeva) to the early part of the nineteenth

century (Tyāgaraja: 1767–1847). It is like combining European poetry from Dante to Blake under one inexpressive label. It is certainly not very perceptive of literary historians to pack great works from five centuries into a straitjacket of a single insensitive critical category.

The colonially sanctioned hierarchic structure of literary values accepted by modern Indian critics leads them to think that the ‘real’ literary and critical issues can be found in Western literary traditions. There is a deep-seated sense of inferiority in their minds, a feeling of being impostors in these fields. The fact is that in British, American or Russian literature there is nothing comparable to the school of Tukārām, Mīrā and Kabīr, or to modern *dalit* writing. Indian literature has its own kind of excellence. Western literatures have their own kinds of excellence. But, because of the incurable sense of inferiority, the *bhāṣā* critics tend to lose emotional touch with the pre-British *bhāṣā* literatures, for appreciating which there are no ready-made Western formulas, since they were not approved by Western Indology. They wish that the *bhāṣā* past had Shakespeares, Drydens and Fieldings, and in consequence tend to neglect their Tukārāms, Kabīrs and Mīrās. There is, then, a conscious activity of repressing images from the culture’s collective unconscious, and banishing them to the deepest recesses of the unconscious. That is how the greatest poets of India’s *bhāṣā* literature make their appearance in the unguarded segments of the social discourse, segments reserved for ‘folk’, women, children, idiots, the ‘irrational’ ones. In the intellectually institutionalized *bhadraloka* discourse they are not fashionable.

In discussions of Gujarātī criticism the period known as *Paṇḍita Yuga* (roughly 1880–1920) seems to define the outermost historical sweep of the critics’ memory. Anything prior to that period is considered to belong to the domain of the mediaevalist. In a survey of Gujarātī criticism, Manasukhalal Jhaveri writes:

Literary criticism in Gujarātī can be said to have developed roughly through four ages. The first covers the period from 1860 to 1880; the second from 1880 to 1920; the third from 1920 to 1950; and the fourth and the current stage commences from the year 1950. There is, of course, nothing rigid or sacrosanct about these dates. Nor do they coincide with publication of books that could be regarded as landmarks in the history of literary criticism in Gujarātī. The year 1860

is roughly the time when the first sprouts of literary criticism were observed. 1880 is the year by which Gujarat, for the first time, confronted the critical thought of University graduates. The year 1920 witnessed the period by which Gandhiji's influence came to be recognized as a steady force under which the life and letters underwent a metamorphosis ...⁶¹

Having made out these four periods of Gujarātī criticism, Jhaveri goes on to state that nothing much happened in the first period. No comment is necessary on the sense in this historiography.

Jhaveri expresses an idea of literary history accepted by a large number of Gujarātī critics. He is typical and not alone in his views. Therefore, even without raising a single doubt, Jhaveri assumes that the University graduates of the 1880s brought a better critical sense into operation. It is true that these graduates had obtained degrees under British benediction; and a writer of Govardhanrām's talent belonged to this generation. But did the graduates go to schools and universities giving English education with minds that were totally blank slates? They had inherited a literary tradition of six or seven centuries, a tradition which, as argued earlier, was still alive and continuous. The Gujarātī literary sensibility they had inherited had built-in mechanisms of dealing with alien cultural forces. Can we say that in Govardhanrām's generation this culturally inherited ability to deal with outsiders was suddenly lost? Surat, which had the longest experience of British residence of all Indian cities, was the city where Narmad, Gujarātī's first modern poet, worked. Is it possible that the folklore of Surat had no impact on the life of Narmad? That Manasukhalal Jhaveri's typical historiography is short-sighted is very unfortunate; but any colonial interference with the culture's self-image can create such defects in historical sight. The modern Indian critic seeks legitimization of his amnesia through a multitude of ways, the chief among them being a faithful reliance on the criteria of some imaginary 'universals' which in reality are merely Western.

Through the benevolent mediation of Indology between Europe and India, Europe came to accept the antiquity of the Sanskrit heritage of India. But neither Indology nor the British colonials paid any attention to the classical period and the British period. Today's Indian critic too feels emotionally in tune with the 'great' Sanskrit classics. Indology was not, unfortunately, gifted with a

good literary sensibility. And as such the modern turning in with Sanskrit classics is done quite indiscriminately. In literary criticism, particularly, every Sanskrit critic from the highly original Bharata and Ānandavardhana to mere commentators like 'Viśvanātha and Appayya Dīkṣitar are considered 'great' theoreticians. Sanskrit theories are paraded with pride in national and international forums. In Gujarātī, important critics like Rasiklal Parikh, Dolaray Mankad, Ramprasad Baxi and Nagindas Parekh have devoted themselves to unearthing Sanskrit critical texts and theories. This trend is not peculiar to Gujarātī. In Marāṭhī too similar attempts have been made by R. S. Jog, W. L. Kulkarni, R. S. Walimbe, S. K. Kshirsagar and D. K. Bedekar. In Indian English criticism, Krishna Rayan, Krishna Chaitanya and K. Krishnamoorthy belong to this type. It is not intended here to question the scholarly worth of their work, only its cultural propriety.

If modern India can connect itself emotionally with ancient India, whereas it cannot—or does not want to—relate itself to the pre-British past, the phenomenon will have to be described as disorder in the culture's psyche. The view of tradition held by the general run of modern Indian critics is voiced by Sushil Kumar De in his history of Bāṅglā literature (1919). De thinks that "the time birth of modern Indian literature was the first half of the nineteenth century." And this view is accorded almost an axiomatic value. The argument such as De's is put forward as a 'historical' argument, and is expected to meet with general agreement, and not as a literary-critical view intended to precipitate a redefinition of the tradition. This inflexible view of *bhāṣā* literatures indicates nothing but failure of memor.

Two distinct types of critical methods have evolved in *bhāṣā* literature study: one for the so-called 'modern' period, another for the 'medieval' period. The method used for 'modern' literature is derived from various branches of literary linguistics developed in the West. The method used for 'medieval' literature is derived from Western theories of historical linguistics and anthropology. In other words, the critical apparatus used for analyzing 'modern' works is 'critical' in nature, whereas that applied to the study of 'medieval' works merely presents facts and details without any assessment. This 'positivistic' method of study used in the case of pre-British literature in the *bhāṣā* reveals an uneasy relationship between the modern critics and the pre-British literary traditions.

The relationship is not sufficiently critical, the critics being either awestruck or indifferent towards those traditions. The job of merely describing the past tradition of a literature is in itself highly demanding, for it presupposes a range of scholarship combined with mature critical sensibility; but the *bhāṣā* critics, because of the uneasy relationship, deliver their critical judgement of the past literary traditions even before they have begun a critical scrutiny.

The history of the *bhāṣā* literatures has been recorded with praiseworthy scholarly care. In Marāṭhī the work of S. G. Tulpure, V. B. Kolte and G. B. Sardar, and in Gujarātī the single-handed efforts of Harivallabh Bhayani, can compare well with the best achievements of literary history and scholarship in any other language. However, literary criticism in the *bhāṣās* has not made sufficient use of the preparatory work by these scholars in order to establish well-informed and critical links with the past traditions. Literary critics have neither evaluated nor established the importance of the emergence of so many new languages and literatures in India's cultural history. Literature can indeed be a key to opening the heart of medieval Indian culture, a means of connecting modern India with pre-British India, and thereby decolonizing the modern Indian sensibility. But the impassive archaeological and historical evidence presented in a positivistic manner by the medievalist is not adequate to answer the question: "Why is it that languages can change so fundamentally in India as they did at the beginning of this millennium?" Unless some of these basic aspects of linguistic transactions in India are sufficiently discussed, literary criticism and history are likely to remain seriously underdeveloped. *Bhāṣā* criticism has not so far taken up the challenge and faced it imaginatively.

It would be instructive to examine some specific instances of literary history. A four-volume history of Gujarātī literature has been produced by the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad. The first of these four is devoted to 'old' literature, the second to 'medieval' and the last two to 'modern' literature. The volume assigned to mediaeval Gujarātī literature embraces a vast span of four centuries: 1450–1850. In its key-note chapter, '*Madhyakāla-na Sāhitya-prakāro*', Chandrakant Mehta states:

According to the well-established scholarly view, the mediaeval period in Gujarātī literature extends from the twelfth century,

that is from the time after Hemacandra's death, down to the nineteenth century, till the death of Dayārām.⁶²

This periodization does not seem to have any concern for literature as a dynamic social institution, or for the extraordinary agility of the Gujarātī language which stabilized itself as a language of literary discourse while its sister branches such as Rājasthānī and Hindī, sprouting from the common Indo-Aryan parent, were still in a state of flux. Since the dynamism of Gujarātī is totally discounted, the 'history' of its literature is reduced by the Parishad volume to a school-text level inventory of authors, forms and calendar events. A history of literature which has no critical inwardness to the period to be historiographed can easily miss the vital spirit of its subject. It can fail in conveying to its readers the feel of the total presence of literature. The socio-cultural unconscious of literature, its linguistic subconscious and stylistic self-consciousness, as well as the transitions in the cultural *episteme* of those four centuries of Gujarat's history are all essential aspects of the Gujarātī mediaeval history. It is not possible to portray all these in the absence of a self-confident critical sensibility.

Marāṭhī literary history is more fortunate in this respect. In the 1950s literary historiography in Marāṭhī was the subject of a major debate. Some of the more important documents related to this debate have been anthologized by Dattatraya Punde in a collection of essays on literary historiography (1986).⁶³ The main issue involved in this discussion was the literary history project undertaken by the Marāṭhī Sahitya Parishad. The original proposal for an exhaustive survey of Marāṭhī literature was drafted by S. M. Mate.⁶⁴ He had planned it in eleven volumes, of which five were to be devoted to the mediaeval period, from 1350 to 1820. These were planned to match five author-based epochs: (i) 1350–1600: Eknāth epoch, (ii) 1600–1700: Tukārām epoch, (iii) 1600–1700: Rāmdās epoch, (iv) 1600–1800: Pandit-poets and chroniclers epoch, and (v) 1600–1820: narrative prose and poetry epoch. In this scheme there was a crude combination of the principle of periodization, author-based epochs, and formal distribution of history. A more sensible plan was suggested earlier by S. V. Ketkar (1932), in which sixteen volumes each were assigned to literature of the pre-British and British periods.⁶⁵ Of the first sixteen, four volumes were to be assigned to literature before Eknāth, and twelve to 'medieval' literature. Ketkar's

distribution of material was mainly genre-based, and had more space for the social context of literature; but it showed clearly the hand of an encyclopaedia-writer at work. Besides, Ketkar's plan was never considered seriously while the Parishad was finalizing its project.

Mate's plan was opposed by D. K. Bedekar and G. B. Sardar, both with leftist leanings, on the ground that history is no mere chronicle, it must also reflect the growth of literature. It calls for a critical analysis of historical data and scholarly researches. Bedekar and Sardar suggested three volumes for the mediaeval Marāṭhī literature—1350–1680: middle-mediaeval period; 1680–1800: final-mediaeval period; and a volume for analytical conclusions and a survey of the transition from the mediaeval to the modern period.⁶⁶ The analysis was to have a mild Marxist orientation. The periodization in this scheme was bound to political events, 1680 being the date of Shivājī's death. This view was accommodated by the Sahitya Parishad, and it modified the original idea of an eleven-volume history to a nine-volume history. Though the volumes published by the Parishad are scholarly, they leave much to be desired in terms of specific critical orientation towards the pre-British Marāṭhī literature.

The tendency to interpret the entire mediaeval span in terms of a 'unified temporal entity', which prevails in Gujarātī, can learn a valuable lesson from the neighbouring Marāṭhī historiography's subtler periodization. Imposing one common scheme of interpretation on the entire period from Hemacandra to Dayārām would result in an incorrect evaluation of the entire period. In Marāṭhī literary historiography the temporal arrangement is satisfactory; but the mediaeval period of Marāṭhī literature also admits, and even demands, a sociological and thematic distribution in terms of the folk, the popular and the elite, in order to avoid the confusion caused in applying the same critical yardstick to an elite Moropant, a popular Tukārām and a folk Honājī. Besides, distinctions in the style and diction need to be established in terms of the Sanskritic, the Persianic, and the native, new Marāṭhī. The history of mediaeval Marāṭhī literature should be a story of its amazing progression from literature with paper and script technology to that with printing technology and university sociology.

Cultural Amnesia

In our discussion of the prevalent Indian attitudes to Western ideas, to the colonial impact, to Sanskrit heritage, and to *bhāṣā* literature,

we observed that the modern Indian critic feels a false emotional proximity to Western and Sanskrit ideas, while he tends to repress the *bhāṣā* tradition and to overlook the 'colonial' side of the colonial experience. In reality the relationship with Western and Sanskrit ideas is but a virtual and idealized relationship, not an organic one. Western ideas entered India during the colonial period, and were guided and conditioned by the colonial context. It would be necessary, therefore, to view Western ideas and the colonial context as constituents of a broad spectrum of an alien graft on Indian culture. Similarly, the Sanskrit heritage has percolated into the modern Indian consciousness after being filtered through *bhāṣā* literature and *bhāṣā* culture. Hence the Sanskrit heritage and the *bhāṣā* heritage need to be seen in terms of a single historic continuity. Not to do so is to introduce distinctions which have no historical basis, and, moreover, which delude Indian critics into believing in the chimera of a non-contextual 'universal' theory of literature and literary historiography. It is difficult to say whether some inexplicable idealism creates this distorted perception of history, or whether it is the faulty perception which gives rise to that idealism.

The misplaced emotional affinity with Western and Sanskrit ideas experienced by modern Indian critics is likely to have the following two sources.

One source, more ancient than we may suspect, is the Janus-faced relationship that the Indian mind has with *mārga* traditions and *deśī* traditions, the 'pan' traditions as against the 'local' traditions. The experience of being stretched ambivalently between the two may create an identity crisis, and, worse still, give rise to self-contempt and self-pity. Most currents of Indian philosophic thought have been more like bridges spanning intellectual divides rather than currents with independent origin and direction. Even at present, the chosen political structure in India continues the tradition by being at once unitary and federal, making room for both the *mārga* and the *deśī*. The continuous fluctuation of priorities, and the profound ambivalence involved in the situation, create, as noted by M. N. Srinivas, self-censure, an agony that is by no means new to Indian culture. Srinivas traces this characteristic in Indian elite culture back to the later Vedic times.

The other source of faulty cultural perception is the cultural demoralization caused by the colonial experience. A colonial encounter reaches the colonized a new intellectual idiom, impairing,

in the process, the natural native style of thinking. By coercively introducing an alien value structure in the existing value structures of its subjects, colonial domination causes serious dislocations and fragmentations in the intellectual discourse of the colonized. It canonizes alien, and usually irrelevant, systems of intellectual 'totems', and deprives the rhythm and syntax of previously existent value systems of their charm and meaning. This disorder manifests itself in the form of cultural repressiveness and amnesia. Projecting static images of the past, inaccurate and inflexible concepts of literary traditions and history, and non-productive affinities with remote but idealized traditions—all are symptoms of this disorder.

The current affliction of cultural amnesia is compounded by the traditional Indian anxiety over the loss of memory. It is, of course, idle to speculate if amnesia has been a constant malaise of the Indian psyche. It would also be idle to speculate if the longevity of Indian culture has any direct connection with his anxiety, for the biological method of cultural anthropology tends to carry the metaphor of culture as a person beyond the domains of logic. However, one can find a variety of examples of the fear of amnesia, and indeed of amnesia itself, in aspects of Indian culture ranging from the profane to the sacrosanct. The most interesting example is to be found in the method of learning by rote which is still in use in this age of the printed page. Ananda Coomaraswamy, in an illuminating and authoritative essay on the place of memory in Indian culture and psyche,⁶⁸ points to a multitude of sources in Brahminical texts discussing memory. God needs no memory, argues Coomaraswamy, for He never forgets; but for human beings Truth and Self have to be approached through memory, through a recollection of what has been forgotten. Amnesia is, thus, considered by Brahminical texts as the basic attribute of human consciousness, and memory as a power that is independent of intelligence. Invoking the *Candogya Upaniṣad* in evidence, Coomaraswamy states:

Memory (*smara*) is more than Space (*ākāśa*, the medium of hearing). Accordingly, even were many men assembled, not being possessed of Memory, neither would they hear any one at all, nor think (*man*), nor recognize (*vijñā*), but if possessed of Memory, they would hear and think and recognize. By Memory, assuredly, one recognizes (*vijñānāti*) children, recognize cattle. Revere Memory ... The subject of Memory

is discussed in *Milinda Panho*, 78–80. It is first shown that it is not by thinking (*citta*) but by Memory (*sati* = *smṛti*) that we remember; for we are not without intelligence even when what was done long ago has been forgotten (*pamuṭṭham* = *pramṛṣtam*). It is then asked, “Does Memory arise (*appajjati*) always as an over-knowledge state (*sabbā ... abhijānantā*) or is Memory factitious (*kaṭumikā* = *kṛitimā*)”, and answered that “Memory occurs in an over-knowledge state, and is also factitious.”⁶⁹

Coomaraswamy argues, with an impressive range of evidence by his side, that “Memory is a kind of latent knowledge,” and that by implication amnesia is a given, if reversible, condition of the human mind. His explanation for the inevitability of amnesia is that Memory transcends space and time; and while entering this life the soul enters these limits and loses memory. The argument is based on the metaphysical assumption of an all-knowing Soul, or Self, *puruṣa* being an *a priori* reality. Memory and amnesia become, in Coomaraswamy’s interpretation, symbolic representations of ‘an omniscient Self’ and ‘the contingent Ego’, respectively.⁷⁰ The contingent Ego, which is the human Ego, must ‘recollect’ its own nature as the omniscient Self, must learn as a child about its Father. The metaphysics of amnesia, with its attendant argument of a hierarchic structure with divine sanction, has hints in it that lead us to the descriptive catalogue of amnesia offered by the experimental psychology of Sigmund Freud.

Amnesia is related, as understood by experimental psychology, to violent unconscious repression of memory. In his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Sigmund Freud claims that there exists a definite relationship between the loss of memory and the nature of the memory lost. This relationship can be merely superficial or complicated and profound. On the basis of this relationship, Freud presents the typology of what he calls ‘the concealment of memory’. I quote from his text which by now has become a classic in the psychology of memory:

[In the given example fully analyzed], I particularly emphasized a peculiarity in the temporal relation between the concealing memory and the contents of the memory concealed by it. The context of the concealing memory in that example belonged

to one of the first years of childhood, while the thoughts represented by it, which remained practically unconscious, belonged to a later period of the individual in question. I called this form of displacement a retro-active or regressive one. Perhaps more often, one finds the reverse relation—that is, an indifferent impression of the most remote period becomes a concealing memory in consciousness, which simply owes its existence to an association with an earlier experience, against whose direct reproduction there are resistances. We would call these *encroaching* or *interposing* concealing memories. What most concerns the memory lies here chronologically beyond the concealing memory. Finally, there may be a third possible case, namely, the concealing memory may be connected with the impression it conceals, not only through its contents, but also through contiguity of time; this is the *contemporaneous* or *contiguous* concealing memory.⁷¹

Freud's formulations need to be amended when used in the context of a culture that has created a pervasive mythology of memory transcending death and retaining itself into another life—probably as a fantasy to counter the culture's perpetual fear of forgetting. But for such amendments we must wait for an Indian genius in experimental psychology. Meanwhile, it should be useful to argue on the basis of Freud's concepts of the concealing memory—though only in a haphazard and tentative form—that cultural amnesia is an inevitable consequence of colonialism. It is caused when a dominated culture, or its constituent features, are branded as inferior by a dominating culture, and are accepted as being as such by the subject culture. If this amnesia destroys the native perception of the immediate past, it also helps as a strategy to preserve the self-respect of the dominated culture as well as to win approval from the dominating culture.

The superior modes of production, efficiency in military organization, and the material success of an intruding alien force can easily intimidate a colonized culture into experiencing a sense of embarrassment for its immediate past. It is this repression which, then, creates an oversized dream image of its distant past. Or to use another Freudian concept, the colonizing force is seen in the role of a parent, hated and feared and imitated, by the colonized culture, which starts perceiving itself as a 'child' who fears its own impotency and fantasizes about the productive power of the

‘parent’. The intimidated child then engages itself in acts to win the approval of the parent to enable itself to define its own new identity. This is where history ceases to be history and becomes an extended spectrum of fantasy and amnesia.

The leaders of the so-called Indian Renaissance considered the processes of modernization as a kind of ‘national rebirth’. There is ample sociological and historical evidence to establish that modernization was quickened by the colonial rule, but not introduced as a totally new feature in Indian culture. The Renaissance, therefore, was not a rebirth but the attainment of maturity in a process that had been initiated at the beginning of the present millennium. However, the idea of rebirth was consistent with this new image of India as a ‘child’ that takes periodic births. The Indological studies and the revivalistic tendencies were a corresponding form of ‘recollection’. The Indian Renaissance and Indian nationalism had thus tacitly accepted cultural amnesia as an indispensable condition for progress.

It is possible, on the one hand, to enumerate several novels and poems written since the time of Macaulay on the theme of amnesia and the fear of forgetting, and, on the other hand, to show amnesia in operation from the beginning of Islamic regimes in India. We will, however, see here only some examples from the colonial period in order to keep the argument within the confines of our present concern. We will see three examples, one each from the area of language, painting and technology.

When the various central-northern dialects were consolidated into what is now known as Hindī in the early part of the nineteenth century, the impetus came from the East India Company and not from the speakers of those dialects. Curiously enough the ‘consolidated’ Hindī emerged from the printing press at Fort William, and its founding father was an officially appointed ‘writer’, Lallūji Lāl (1763–1825). His job in the Company Government was to prepare printed texts in Hindī.⁷² But while performing the clerical job of putting a language in print, Lallūji performed a creative act by preparing a Hindī rendering of the *Bhāgavata Pūrāṇa* in Khari Bolī—the R. P. of Hindī. This rendering, *Premasāgar* (The Ocean of Love, 1805–6) became the principal textbook for European students of Hindī throughout the nineteenth century and became a source book much relied upon by Indians too. Lallūji Lāl’s selection of a *purāṇa*—a history told mythologically—for using the new medium

and technology of script in print is a case of the typical Indian response to new technology. On the one hand, he traditionalized the technology and endowed it with a ritual status, on the other, he expressed his urge to remember the Indian past and displayed his uncertain sense of history. It is not implied that he himself was aware of this tension. We have the advantage of hindsight.

The above reading of Lāl's consciousness seems to have at least some substance in it when we support it with evidence from the field of painting. When the practice of using a straight brush (in place of the curved brush of native tradition), synthetic pigments and the naturalistic technique of painting arrived in India with the British, they touched the genius of a painter like Rājā Ravivarmā.⁷³ Ravivarmā (1848–1906), modern India's first notable painter, saw a European painter at work at the court of Travancore. Greatly impressed by the technique of portrait drawing, known in his days as 'archaeological' drawing, he started creating portraits of gods, heroes and mythological personalities, giving them substantial body and colour. His goddesses were particularly healthy. His fame spread all over India, and his lithographed works adorned houses all over the country. Even Tagore praised his work. What constituted the peculiar appeal of his work? He certainly did not follow the archaeological method of re-creating the past faithfully, for his gods and heroes bear little likeness to the details given in Hindu sacred books. He was not following 'naturalism', for his themes came from a world of fantasy. It is possible that the superior, Western technology of painting disturbed Ravivarmā's memory of the past, but it was a distant past full of dream images. Ravivarmā could not gather images and themes for his work from the experience of the Black Hole of Calcutta or the mutiny of 1857. His kind of amnesia can be put in clearer relief when we note that during the initial phase of the contact with the British—before India had accepted complete military defeat at the hands of the British—the painters at Kālighāṭ could freely draw on their immediate environment.

Another instance of this tendency is to be found in the way in which the printing technology was used in its early days. M. N. Srinivas tells us that the majority of books published during the initial years of printing in India were 'revivalistic':

... the manipulation of Western technology does not mean that the manipulators have accepted a rationalistic and

scientific world view ... There are instances, moreover, where Westernization has given birth to forces which are mutually at cross-purposes ... The introduction of printing, for instance, made possible the transmission of not only modern knowledge but also the knowledge of traditional epics, mythology, the lives of saints, and other religious literature ... In the political and cultural field, Westernization has given birth not only to nationalism but also to revivalism ...⁷⁴

Srinivas's comments generalize on a pervasive social process that he has termed 'Westernization'.

In India's Westernization has brought with it a regressive tendency of Sanskritization, in the sense of reviving a distant past and repressing the immediate past. This fantasization of the past, the loss of capacity to see that the distant past has reached modern times after passing through a complex process of mutation at the hands of the immediate past, and the uneasy relationship with recent history—all are consequences of the cultural amnesia into which Indian culture has regressed during the colonial period. The worst part of the colonial impact was that it snatched away India's living cultural heritage and replaced it with a fantasy of the past. This amnesia, which has affected our awareness of native traditions which are still alive, is perhaps the central factor of the crisis in Indian criticism.

A Never-ending Transition

Cultural Archaeology

The present state of amnesia in Indian literary criticism underlines two urgent needs: i) to reexamine the British impact on Indian literary traditions, and ii) to formulate a pragmatic literary historiography for *bhāṣā* literatures. Problems of literary theory cannot be understood in isolation from the problems of literary history, particularly at the present juncture of Indian literary criticism. Therefore a redefinition of cultural identity becomes necessary before an attempt is made to articulate the existing value-structures in criticism or to formulate new theoretical positions.

R. B. Patankar hints at the two needs mentioned above in an essay, 'The Three Alternatives',¹ which is perhaps the first attempt to relate modern literary criticism to the native *bhāṣā* traditions. He suggests that the study of the sixteenth or seventeenth century 'roots' of Indian criticism, is the key to understanding modern poetics in Marāṭhī. By extension his argument is valid in the context of other *bhāṣā* literatures too. Patankar also puts forth the idea that India might have brought itself to the threshold of modernity even without the British impact. He writes:

We cannot hope to find or create *our* literary framework in a seminar where ineffectual angels flap their borrowed Western and ancient Indian wings in a void. We must shed these wings and assert ourselves as First Class citizens. I am not suggesting that we should seal off our borders in space and time. We should arrive at an intellectual articulation of our literary sensibility as it was before the British advent. Sixteenth or seventeenth century would serve as promising starting points. We shall find there poetry pre-occupied with ethical problems, problems of daily life without losing sight of the problems of eternity. Let us then move from there to

the modern times with their new problems, try to visualize how people with that value-structure and sensibility would have tackled them, see if there were adequate techniques of production, whether they would have ploughed their surplus back into production instead of directing it towards conspicuous consumption or charity, whether they would have recognized the due importance of *Artha* and *Kāma* and taken steps to organize these two aspects of life. Perhaps we would have been required to assimilate ideas from abroad, and the ancient past; but we would have then assimilated and not been dominated by them. Had not the British violently arrested our natural growth probably we might have, on our own, developed into a modern nation.²

The concluding part of the argument is futile, an idle speculation. But the idea of going back to the *bhāṣā* past can be immensely fruitful for evolving a more relevant historiography. However, this cultural archaeology presents its own peculiar difficulties. The lack of scholarly material related to and belonging to the pre-British *bhāṣā* past is one difficulty. The more daunting problem is the fact that much of the material related to the seventeenth century emanates from records left behind by casual, non-literary European observers such as merchants, travellers and administrators. Most of them were slow to learn Indian languages, and were hardly interested in *bhāṣā* literature.

When the Orient was still a new discovery for Europe, a feared and mysterious primitive being rather than a domesticated animal, Orientalism was almost a genre of creative writing.³ Milton's numerous references to Ind in *Paradise Lost* and Dryden's play *Aurengzebe* belonged to this genre.⁴ Understandably, therefore, the seventeenth century European reports on India were written in keeping with accepted stereotypes. The fiction of India that Orientalism created in the seventeenth century has percolated to documents on which the history of that period is based. Indian historiography which developed during the nationalistic phase was a reaction to these fictional accounts. Indian historians tried to assert the virtues that the Orientalist reports had denied India. Therefore, those assertions too need to be questioned thoroughly. Here are some typical samples of the source material of Indian history.

James Forbes (1749–1819) observed, after spending several years in Gujarat, that the Asiatic people “attended very little to the fine arts.”⁵ Unlike his namesake, A. K. Forbes (1821–1865) who contributed in several ways to the development of Gujarātī language and literatures,⁶ James Forbes could not appreciate the poetry of Narsimh Mehta and Akhā, which was a living presence in Gujarat, as much during Forbes’s times as it is today. His insensitive opinion survived two centuries and found its echoes in Sir George Grierson’s report in his monumental work, *Linguistic Survey of India* (1894–1927). Grierson declares, “Gujarātī has not yet produced a great poet, approaching in excellence the mediaeval Masters of Hindustan.”⁷ He obviously missed such major poets as Premānand and Dayārām.

The fountainhead of the European views of India was the report by a Frenchman, François Bernier, who spent fourteen long years in the Mughal court and in travelling through India, and wrote a compendium of ‘information’ on Indian life and culture. His account of India (1656–68) was influential throughout Europe in forming an image of India, more particularly that of the Oriental despot. The appeal of this strange and simplified image led Dryden to write his play *Aurengzebe* (1675).

A modern-day critique of India by V. S. Naipaul pales in comparison with Bernier’s testimony on the sociology of Indian art and literature:

Can it excite wonder that, under these circumstances, the arts do not flourish here as they would do under a better government, or as they flourish in our happier France? No artist can be expected to give his mind to his calling in the midst of a people who are either wretchedly poor, or who, if rich, assume an appearance of poverty, and who regard not the beauty and excellence, but the cheapness of an article, a people whose grandees pay for a work of art considerably under its value, and according to their own caprice, and who do not hesitate to punish an importunate artist, or tradesman, with the *korrah* ... The arts in the *Indies* would have long ago lost their beauty and delicacy, if the Monarch and principal *Omrahs* did not keep in their pay a number of artists who work in their houses, teach the children, and are stimulated to exertion by the hope of reward and the fear of *korrah* ...

A profound and universal ignorance is the natural consequence of such a state of society as I have endeavoured to describe. Is it possible to establish in Hindoustan academies and colleges properly endowed? Where shall we seek for founders? Or, should they be found, where are the scholars?⁸

It was this kind of simplified and fictional perception of India, to a large extent divorced from the social reality of that period, that was later recycled through the writings of scholars and administrators. European Indologists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did make some impressive scholarly forays into the ancient past of India, but their vision of the contemporary Indian society retained the element of dark humour introduced by Bernier.

The British period of India's history stands between modern Indian scholars and the pre-British past not as a temporal episode alone but also as an epistemological stumbling block. In order to see beyond it, one has to see through it. It would have been easy to weed out the politically biased and mischievous European reports on pre-British India from the historical source material, had it not been for the subsequent legitimation endowed upon them by the British education system. The worst hit victim of the epistemological inflection created by the erroneous Indology is the past of *bhāṣā* literatures. Hence, the need to disabuse Indian literary history of the idea of a Dark Age, and also, at the other end of the spectrum, that of a Golden Age, can hardly be overstated.⁹ The actual starting point of our enquiry into the problems of contemporary literary criticism is obviously the period in which *bhāṣā* literatures made their beginnings. However, a closer look at the situation in the seventeenth century does throw some useful light on the crisis in criticism today.

Seventeenth century India presents a record of highly impressive achievements in the arts and in literature. The contributions to music, painting, dance, architecture and poetry made during this period form a glorious chapter in India's cultural history. Yet, no simple formula of the relationship between living cultural traditions and great social problems can explain the entire period satisfactorily.¹⁰ One encounters here a paradox difficult to explain. Side by side with the emergence of a novel Marāṭhī poetics in Tukārām's (1598–1649) redefinition of the Hindu world-view, one finds Jagannātha (1620–1665)¹¹ concluding the long, tired line of Hindu poetics in Sanskrit. On the one hand is seen the development of

a novel literary genre like the Assamīyā *Burāñji*, on the other the faltering progress in Hindī of the Bhakti school created so ably in the preceding century by Mīrā (1498–1573), Kabīr (1440–1518) and Tulsidās (1532–1623). It was in the seventeenth century that Panjābī produced a great poet like Wāris Shāh, and Gujarātī the equally, great Premānand and Akhā; but the same period saw a rapid decline in Telugu literature in spite of ample patronage given to the arts in Andhra. In other words, the century was characterized by the decline of the Hindu intellectual tradition of poetics, even while, politically, Hindu nationalism was in the ascendant.

Jagannātha's *Rasagangādhara*, a comprehensive work on literary style or *alaṃkāra*, as Sanskrit poetics termed it, is considered by his twentieth century commentators to be comparable to the best in the *alaṃkāra* tradition. It is also considered to be original to some extent. Jagannātha had studied grammar and philosophy under distinguished specialists in those fields, and was himself an erudite scholar and a gifted poet and stylist. However, he chose not to live in the Hindu milieu in which his learning, poetry and philosophy had been developed. He sought patronage at the Mughal court in Delhi, moving from his native Telugu to Assamīyā, and then to a Persian linguistic milieu. He wrote poetry in Sanskrit, which by his time was no more a language related to life; but his subjects were not necessarily from the Sanskrit world. *Asafavilās*, an elegy that Jagannātha wrote, had for its subject a relative of Shahjehan. His poetry and poetics, thus, admitted of a social, metaphysical and linguistic fragmentation.

The great Marāṭhī poet Tukārām was Jagannātha's contemporary. So were two other major figures of the Marāṭhī poetic tradition: Mukteśvar (late sixteenth century) and Rāmdās (1608–1681). While Jagannātha was composing verses on Mughal courtiers in the tired metres of Sanskrit, Tukārām had been creating a new religious discourse. His *abhangas* brought together diverse social groups and creeds, but, more important, they integrated the diction of Marāṭhī poetry with the language of the common people and gave great expressive power to both. Tukārām's vibrant and socially oriented poetry, written in a living language, contributed substantially to the growing Marāṭhī nationalism. When we juxtapose Jagannātha with Tukārām, within their shared cultural context, it would be possible to formulate the following two questions: i) What was the exact historical sequence of the decline of Sanskrit poetics and the emergence of *bhāṣā* literatures? and ii) What was the nature of the

relation between the Great Tradition and the newly emerging little traditions, between the *mārga* and the *deśīs*? In following up these two questions it should become possible to move a little further in our search for the value-structures in *bhāṣā* criticism.

A Never-ending Transition

I

If one were to adopt the principle of a sequential periodization of *bhāṣā* literatures, following the European models of 'continuous motion' from one literary epoch to another or 'oscillation' between polarities, one would find it a frustrating job to propose any useful historiography. By drawing on these models, not firmly ingrained in the Indian literary sensibility, it would be logical to expect that *bhāṣā* literature was matched by a decline of Sanskrit poetics and a corresponding rise of criticism in the *bhāṣās* themselves. The temporal sequence of events in the process of transition ought to have been—(i) decline of Sanskrit as a literary language (ii) emergence of the *bhāṣās* (iii) decline of Sanskrit poetics and (iv) emergence of *bhāṣā* criticism. But history as it was defies this logic.

The two most important deviations from this logical sequence are (a) Sanskrit poetics does not show signs of decline several centuries after the emergence of *bhāṣā* literatures, and (b) no significant criticism in the *bhāṣā* traditions is in evidence. Hence the process of transition from Sanskrit poetics to *bhāṣā* criticism appears to demand a fresh and more adequate historiography.

It may amaze a student of Indian literature that though India had in the past, and continues to have in the present, literary traditions in a great many languages, no ancient, mediaeval or modern Indian language has produced a well-developed poetics, with the solitary exception of Sanskrit. The British impact and the Western influence resulted in some writing in the nature of a theory of literature; but much of this has been 'poetics' only in an academic sense, with no organic links with creative literature in modern India. A look at the available statistics about languages in India may be instructive. There are eighty-two languages at present in India, each of which is spoken by a minimum of one million people.¹² Many of these are literary languages, with well-established traditions of creative literature. Others may not have written literature, but do have a rich heritage of song and drama. On the other hand, some languages

are spoken by a smaller number and yet have developed written literary traditions. English, for instance, takes sixty-seventh place in the numerical strength of speakers claiming it as their first language, but it has a rapidly growing body of creative literature to its credit. Besides these living languages, there have been several that had rich literary traditions at one time, though they are now extinct. In other words, the number of languages that ought to matter in a historical perspective of Indian literature is indeed very large. However, except for Sanskrit, no Indian language or literature has ever cultivated literary theory as an intellectual discipline or genre.

Perhaps the only exception (leaving aside Sanskrit) to this pervasive absence of a theory of literature is the system of poetics in Tamil.¹³ The 'system' comprises three original texts and several subsequent commentaries. These three source texts of Tamil poetics are: the *Poruḷatikāram* of Tolkāppiyam (approximately AD 450, Iraiyanar's *Kalāvilaya* or Akapporuḷ (fourth to sixth century), and Aiyana Itanar's *Purapporuḷveṇṇpāmālai* (eleventh century). Among the commentaries, the most important is Nakkīrar's commentary on *Kalāvilaya*. The most original contribution of *Poruḷatikāram* is its classification of poetry into two main genres—*ākam* (poetry dealing with the subjective world) and *puram* (poetry dealing with material themes). This division has been seminal to all subsequent developments in Tamil poetry. However, it does not seem to have influenced Sanskrit poetics. Rather, it seems to have assimilated the Sanskrit theory of *rasa*, which in Tamil became *meypattu*.

The other strong rival to Sanskrit in intellectual fields was Pāli (which is a label given by modern linguistics to a group of dialects).¹⁴ As in Sanskrit, in Pāli too there were well-developed philosophic traditions. It had acquired political patronage, a background of vibrant social debate, and had developed traditions of creative literature. Since it was the language of Buddhist literature, it was not bound by the Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit world-view. Yet, it has no achievement to boast of in literary criticism. The only critical treatise found in Pāli was written by the Sri Lankan scholar Sangharakkhita in the latter half of the twelfth century, eighteen hundred years after the language became accepted for use in philosophic discourse. Commentators feel that Sangharakkhita was dependent on Sanskrit models from which his technical terms are borrowed and adapted.

The only text of Sangharakkhita's considered to have some originality is *Vuttodaya*, his book on Pāli metres; but the entire

terminology, and with it the linguistic assumptions of Sanskrit poetics, enter his work, depriving it to that extent of its claim to originality. Sangharakkhita had no successors in Pāli.

Among the modern Dravidian languages, Telugu and Malayāḷam had developed some stray aspects of lexicography, but it was Kannaḍa that produced critical works of some significance.¹⁵ Of these the most valued is *Kavirājamārga* (ninth century) by Nṛpatunga or Srivijayā. The next in importance is Nāgavarmā's *Kāvyaḷokana* (eleventh century). *Kavirājamārga* was an attempt at transplanting critical concepts from Sanskrit to Kannaḍa, and in the process it laid down the guiding principles of Kannaḍa syntax, style and metre. *Kāvyaḷokana*, on the other hand, reversed this process and moved closer to the Sanskrit tradition, and while offering numerous illustrations from Kannaḍa verse to explain styles and genres, depended too heavily on the authority of Sanskrit poetics like Vāmana, Rudraṭa, Rājaśekhara, etc. Between this eleventh century text and B. M. Srikanthaiah's *Kannadigāriḡe Olleya Sāhitya* early in the twentieth century, Kannaḍa produced some of the greatest poetry in the world, but no critical theory. Yet, Kannaḍa's achievement in literary criticism seems to be far better than that of Hindi which too had equally great poetry. Hindi has some isolated comments on the concepts like *nāyaka-nāyika-bheda* (intermixture of elements of plot and character), and *śṛṅgāra* (treatment of man-woman relation in poetry), in its old Brajbhāṣā form. It also shares with the neighbouring Bāṅglā the development of the concept of *bhaktirasa*, adding one more *rasa* to the repertoire of aesthetic emotions well established in Sanskrit. However, most of the works in Brajbhāṣā were digests prepared as educational aids, and were predictably unoriginal. They were in fact ordinary school textbooks. This tendency is still rife in Hindi.

Bāṅglā has been a leading literary language since its exposure to British influence in the eighteenth century. But before that its development was not what one would expect it to be. The development of criticism in Bāṅglā is best summarized by a recent history of Bāṅglā literature in the following words:

... pre-modern Bengali literature was characterized by a complete lack of any theoretical writing on literature, poetics, aesthetics or stylistics. In other words, it did not create any codified aesthetic canon of its own which would help the poet

to learn to write and their audiences and readers to discern between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ literature. It will suffice to recall numerous Sanskrit works on poetics and their innumerable rules to realize how different the situation was in Bengali. On the one hand, Bengali poets simply followed the example of their predecessors and were led more or less by their poetic instinct, on the other, some of them who were acquainted with Sanskrit literature made free use of various Sanskrit works on poetics, especially that by Rupa Goswami, and to a certain extent adapted some of their rules to Bengali. Literary criticism of any kind was similarly absent in pre-modern Bengali literature and could have hardly been compensated for by a few anthologies of Vaisnava poems which at least indicated what the general consensus held to be the best achievements in this particular branch.¹⁶

The story of criticism in Gujarātī, Marāṭhī and Oriyā is no different. It is possible to argue that the lack of political freedom was responsible for the absence of intellectual disciplines like literary criticism. This is, however, too specious an argument. Besides, it is not uniformly true of all the *bhāṣā* and for all the centuries of foreign political domination. It would be highly instructive therefore to examine criticism in the Islamic languages—Arabic, Persian and Urdu—which enjoyed political patronage and also had poetic excellence, enabling literary criticism to develop in them.

Persian was accepted as the official language of the Mughal administration by Akbar in AD 1552; though Turkish was more popular than Persian, owing to the ‘low’ sociological associations of Turkish, it was in Persian that the Islamic literature of India found its great efflorescence. Its impressive line of poets is inaugurated by Amir Khosrau (1253–1325), and is ushered into the modern period by the great masters, Gālib (1797–1869) and Iqbāl (1875–1937).

Here it is important to note that unlike in many of the *bhāṣās*, the Islamic languages had well-developed forms of discursive prose. Of particular interest for the present study are the works on medicine prepared under the leadership of Miān Bhawan (executed in 1512),¹⁷ on law by Molla Giwān (d. 1717),¹⁸ and on lexicography by Gamāluddin Husain Ingu (text 1623),¹⁹ soon after Persian became the official language. A culture’s self-awareness in terms of its law, medicine and grammar is an important precondition

for awareness of its aesthetics. In order that this statement is not misunderstood I should like to add that the knowledge of medicine—a system of management of pain, of anaesthetics, of birth and death—is interrelated to the knowledge of poetry—a system of management of pleasure, of aesthetics and of creation. Law as an activity involving ethical abstractions is closely similar to criticism as an activity involving aesthetic abstractions. And grammar does for a language what criticism does for literary language. However, though these three disciplines made significant progress in Persian, there was no attempt made to develop a theory of literature in that language.

The culture associated with and developed by the society that used Persian was rich in architecture, music, dance and painting. It had developed intellectual disciplines like astronomy, historiography, and philosophy. It had an independent world-view derived from its Islamic religion and its political position of advantage. Since this differed radically from the Hindu world-view evolved through Sanskrit, literature in the Persian language had every reason and opportunity to look for a new system of literary canons. But Persian denied itself this opportunity. The literary career of Khosrau,²⁰ the first great Persian poet in India, forms an eloquent example of the low priority given to literary criticism in Persian.

Born of a Turkish father and a mother of Indian extraction, Khosrau was trained in the craft of poetry, and had a very wide exposure to various literary styles used in northern India at the time. His contributions to the *ghazal* form of poetry and to the *tarānā* and *khyāl* styles of singing deserve to be considered as some of the greatest by any single person. He seems to have been a prolific writer, to judge by the ninety-two books that he wrote on Indian life, customs, political affairs and personal history. His knowledge of Indian life, culture and history was extensive. He is also believed to have written a treatise on music, which indicates his ability as a theoretician. Considering his scholarship and interests it was more than probable that Khosrau was familiar with Sanskrit poetics, which had witnessed a remarkable efflorescence in the two centuries preceding him. It is not improbable that Khosrau knew the *dhvani* and *alaṃkāra* theories. Yet, he did not venture to introduce that branch of literature into Persian. His successors during the five centuries that followed maintained his precept.

From the examples discussed above it may be safely deduced that no theory of literature of any consequence was produced by and for the *bhāṣā* literatures until they were exposed to British literary influence in the nineteenth century. It is, however, conceptually impossible to imagine so many poetry traditions without their own poetics—whether articulated or not—just as it is impossible to think of consciousness without language. It is therefore necessary to consider whether the absence of poetics—or more appropriately, well-articulated poetics—in the *bhāṣā* literatures was not the absence of only a certain kind of poetics rather than poetics of any kind whatever. It is perhaps possible that the history of *bhāṣā* literatures does not conform to a preformed notion of poetics or theory of literature. In the next part of this section we will try to probe into this question as far as it is possible on the basis of evidence available to us.

II

An enquiry into the social context of the period when the *bhāṣās* started emerging in India would reveal large changes in the value structures on which classical Indian society was based. Historians have noted that during the eleventh century—the century that saw the rise of Marāṭhī, Gujarātī and Bāṅglā—the political structures, the concepts of law and the organization of the economy had started undergoing rapid changes.²¹ The arrival of Islam in India was a radical cultural experience for the generations involved in the earliest encounter with this alien force. Literature of that period clearly shows the growth of regionalism as well as deviation from Hindu orthodoxy. This was happening all over India.

Of all the changes, the most remarkable and conspicuous was the shift from Sanskrit to the *bhāṣā* as the medium of literary creation. Perceiving the historical situation in this light, one would expect corresponding shifts in the modes of perceiving literary excellence as well, particularly since literature remained an essential part of theology and of university education throughout India's history.²² Therefore, it becomes difficult to understand why Sanskrit poetics was not replaced by the *bhāṣā* poetics during the first few centuries of this millennium; why, on the contrary, it continued to hold its own for centuries after the *bhāṣā* literatures replaced Sanskrit as a living literary tradition.

Islamic adventures had started invading parts of India in the eighth century. But the first serious Islamic blow was dealt to

the classical structure by Mahmud of Ghazni in AD 1001. After repeated aggressions he occupied the Punjab in 1025. The three centuries between Ghazni's first raid on the Somnath temple and the completion of the first great Marāṭhī classic, Jñānadeva's *Jñāneśvari*, in 1290 show a great transition in India history.

Surprisingly, but by no means accidentally, a wide range of theoreticians, from Abhinavagupta (eleventh century) to Vāgbhaṭa (fourteenth century), did significant work during the period when the *bhāṣās* were consolidating their literary foundations. These theoreticians included such important names as Bhattanāyaka, Kuntaka, Mahimbhatta, Bhoja, Kṣemendra, Mammaṭa, Ruṣya, Vāgbhaṭa, Hemacandra, Jayadeva, and Vidyādhara. This simultaneous growth of Islamic political domination, literature in the *bhāṣās*, and literary theory in Sanskrit, throws overboard all simple formulas of the relationship between socio-political and cultural structures. It shows that the emergence of the *bhāṣās*, literatures and the decline of Sanskrit poetics are not temporally sequential episodes. What is more important, it shows that in respect of literary theory, the *bhāṣās* literatures were not born 'innocent'. All this clearly points to the fact that the evolutionary model of literary historiography, which considers the progression from one unified epoch to another as the essential principle of literary history, is inadequate to explain this situation.

The near-absence of theorizing about literature in the *bhāṣās* might have been due to too much knowledge of Sanskrit poetics rather than too little of it. Hemacandra in Gujarātī and Khosrau in Persian demonstrate the *bhāṣā* writers' unwillingness to adapt Sanskrit poetics to literatures in their own languages. The feeble attempts at such adaptation made by Sangharakkhita in Pāli and by Nṛpatunga in Kannaḍa, found few successors, and their legacy did not find acceptance in the respective languages. On the other hand, Sanskrit poetics continued to develop, undeterred by the Islamic political invasions and the *bhāṣās* literary invasions.

One way of explaining this anachronism, and I think a rather superficial way, is by pointing out the tradition of multilingualism built into the system of Sanskrit poetics. Sanskrit poetics shows an extraordinary sensitivity to regional linguistic variations. Most of the Sanskrit linguists and poeticsians were polyglots. For instance, Viśvanātha (1300–1380) illustrates multilingual poetry by citing his own *Prasastiratnāvalī*, a poem he wrote using sixteen different

languages.²³ One imagines, therefore, that Sanskrit poetics did not feel threatened by linguistic heterodoxy. Multilingualism had been an accepted practice in creative literature too. For instance, in the early classical drama, different languages and language dialects were used for characters belonging to different social classes.

The Sanskrit plays using several languages or language dialects in one scene implied a social hierarchy. In that hierarchy the *bhāṣās* (or their various predecessors) were considered as being socially inferior to Sanskrit. The new literatures in the *bhāṣās* challenged this hierarchy. Jñānadeva called his Marāṭhī a language sweeter than nectar; and two centuries later, Eknāth clearly asked:

If Sanskrit was made by Gods, was Prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errands of vanity alone. Whether it is Sanskrit or Prakrit, wherever the story of God is told it is essentially holy and must be respected. God is no partisan of tongues. To Him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike. My language, Marāṭhī, is worthy of expressing the highest sentiments, and is rich-laden with the fruits of divine knowledge.²⁴

As against this increasing linguistic heterodoxy, Sanskrit poetics was becoming more rigid in its outlook, and hair-splitting in *alaṃkāraśāstra* (stylistics). Abhinavagupta's famous text, *Abhinavabhāratī* and Ghazni's attacks on the Somanath temple came at the same point of time in Idnian history. With Abhinavagupta the tradition of Sanskrit poetics gained immensely in sophistication, though, or perhaps because, it started losing contact with contemporary literature.

Ever since Indology revived scholarly interest in Sanskrit culture, scholars have tended to look at Sanskrit poetics more as a subject of scholarship than as a component of the living literary culture of classical India. Indology considered the whole tradition from Bharata to Jagannātha as one unified tradition. It is more realistic, however, to view it as a long sequence of continuous changes. Ashok Kelkar, who presents Sanskrit poetics from this perspective, distributes the tradition into three distinct phases, each with a specific theoretical emphasis.²⁵

The three phases, according to Kelkar, are: (i) Daṇḍin (AD 700–750), Vāmana (AD 800), Bhāmaha (AD 700–750) and Udbhata (AD 800), and their *rasa-guṇa* and *rasa-alaṃkāra* theories; (ii) Ānandavardhana (AD 890), Dhananjaya (AD 700–750), Kuntaka

(10th century), Rājaśekhara (AD 900–950), etc. with their *dhvani* and *vakrokti* theories; and (iii) poeticians from Abhinavagupta (925–1025) to Jagannātha (1600–1650) with their synthesis of earlier theories and their tradition of producing textbooks. This historical approach is helpful in understanding the ‘civilization dynamics’,²⁶ as sociologists would call it, of the Indian tradition of literary theory.

Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka* came, we are told, as a culmination of a lively debate which was going on for the two preceding centuries. It then became accepted as the central critical statement of classical Indian culture. Its relation with other disciplines like philosophy and linguistics, with social forces and political developments, and with the new religious awareness of its time contributed to its becoming the centre of an intellectual tradition. The contemporary view of Sanskrit poetic tradition considers Abhinavagupta as Ānandavardhana’s direct successor. The two are separated by a chronological gap of a century and a half; and by the standards of the time-scale to which Sanskrit poetics belongs, this gap does not appear to be very substantial. But what seems to be forgotten is that by the time Abhinavagupta, with his thousand followers, walked away from society into a cave in the Himalayas.²⁷ The vital links between poetics and the society producing it had snapped. In Abhinavagupta’s lifetime Sanskrit had started accepting its cultural marginalization. The fact that Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta used common critical terminology is not enough to bind them together in a common epoch of Sanskrit poetics. The two should be treated as belonging to two distinct phases of a tradition. What would have been considered as heresy in Ānandavardhana’s classical India had already started receiving acceptance in Abhinavagupta’s post-classical India. It is true that Abhinavagupta and his successors in the Sanskrit critical tradition brought to it greater intellectual sophistication. Usually this sophistication is misconstrued as an indication of development and growth. But it is more than likely that the sophistication observed in the post-Abhinava tradition of poetics is related to its orthodoxy and alienation from the extant social concerns.

The transition in Sanskrit poetics occurring during Abhinavagupta’s period can be understood properly if poetics is treated as a subsystem of culture rather than as an autonomous intellectual activity. So far, no social history of Sanskrit poetics has been written by any modern scholar. We have to make a beginning, therefore, by proposing

some crude hypotheses in this direction, with the help of social history. Sociologists like Max Weber, Louise Dumont and Samuel Eisenstadt²⁸ have offered some general observations about the processes of social change in India. Of these attempts, Eisenstadt's explanation of what he calls 'the civilizational dynamics' comes closest to offering useful guidelines for analyzing the transition in the Indian literary culture at the beginning of this millennium. He sees at the source of the increasing heterodoxy, manifest in the emergence of several new cults, sects and cultural practices, an ever increasing tension between the metaphysical ordering of the universe and the ethical ordering of existence. In other words, a perceptible gap between god's world and man's world caused the transition from the classical to the post-classical Indian society. Having described the general character of this tension, he goes on to comment on its consequences:

An almost unavoidable by-product of this perception of tension between the transcendental and the mundane was the development of various versions of 'salvation'—i.e. means of resolving the perceived tension. Most such versions focused on the need for the reconstruction of human personality and behaviour in accordance with precepts of the higher moral or metaphysical order. Other visions went beyond this, demanding reconstruction of the entire socio-political and economic order.²⁹

To the extent that it is valid for the period it deals with, this analysis implies that the tradition of Sanskrit poetics too had perceived, and it was required to take into account, the tension between the metaphysical assumption of literary theory and the social dynamics of the literature it concerned itself with. The development of the tradition of poetics and its capacity to amend itself to suit the needs of changing times, depended on its clear perception of this tension. It would be useful to see how the tradition of Sanskrit poetics conducted itself through this period of transition.

In its early stages of development,³⁰ Sanskrit poetics had evolved the concept of *lokottara*, which conceptualized the aesthetic experience in terms of a transcendental delight. Bharata maintained that the aesthetic experience is very similar to the experience of spiritual delight. Care, however, was taken not to identity *kāvya* and *ānanda*

with *brahmananda*, aesthetic delight with metaphysical ecstacy. The formulation of the *rasa* theory of poetry and drama clearly showed the awareness that the theatre was basically a *lokadharmi* (socially-oriented) *nāṭyadharma* (dramatic art). The next major step in the development of Sanskrit poetics was the formulation of the *dhvani* theory, which preserved Bharata's distinction between the symbolic and the realistic, the worldly and the other-worldly, the soul and the body of sound. But the distinction starts getting blurred in Abhinavagupta's post-classical India. In fact, the whole thrust of the last phase of Sanskrit poetics is towards imposing an artificial synthesis on concepts so meticulously evolved, defined and separated by Bharata, Ānandavardhana and Kuntaka. Viśvanātha wrote his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* after the *bhāṣās* had established their literary traditions and the Hindu polity was completely replaced by an Indo-Islamic polity. By the time Viśvanātha wrote his *opus*, in the fourteenth century, even the distinction between poetry and drama was more or less lost; or more appropriately, the critical perception of that distinction was lost. In his terse definition of verbal art, "*vākyam rasāmakam kāvyam*" (poetry is aesthetically pleasing linguistic structure),³¹ he clearly intended to cover both poetry and drama. Similarly blurred was the distinction between an autonomous *loka*—sphere of existence—of sound and its physical manifestation in terms of *sphoṭa*—revelation of meaning by describing all poetic *dhvani* as emanating from a divine sphere, as *rasāmakadhvani*. The original treatise on *dhvani*, Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*, had taken great care to establish a distinction between *vastudhvani* (significant), *alaṃkāradhvani* (suggestion) and *rasadhvani* (evocation), all of which constitute *pratiyamana* (implied meaning) as against *vācya* (stable meaning).

Viśvanātha was not the only major representative of this tendency towards regression and the trend of decline seen in the destructive synthesis of finely evolved concepts. This tendency is seen in every theorist from Abhinavagupta. And the decadence can be seen setting in in Sanskrit poetics with respect to every concept and genre discussed in it. Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha had, for instance, used two categories, *arthguṇa* and *śabdaguṇa*,³² to describe separately the thematic character and the stylistic and structural character of epic poetry. Three centuries later, Bhoja continued to employ these two categories; but he also added one more of his own, namely, *ubhayaguṇa* (composite properties of structure and theme

of an epic).³³ He described five of these composite characteristics as being essential to the epic form: i) *rasarūpasandharbhatva* (correspondence between aesthetic emotion and the form in any given part of the work), ii) *pātrānurūpabhāṣyatva* (correspondence between the dignity of a character and the dignity of his speech), iii) *arthānurūpacāndastva* (correspondence between the substance and metrical patterns), iv) *samastalokaranjanatva* (entertaining to all audiences), and v) *sadālamkāravākyatva* (well-embellished structure and diction). Daṇḍin's original definition of *sargabandha* (episodic or epic poetry) had not ruled out the close interdependence of epic style and epic theme; but he had established it less pedantically. His concept of epic was finer. It had suggestively outlined the thematic content of an epic and the stylistic features of episodic narrative, and it only hinted at the correspondence between the theme and the structure in a completely non-prescriptive way. In short, the tradition of Sanskrit poetics from Abhinavagupta onwards indicates, through its increasing sophistication of terminology and synthesizing of concepts, an uneasy awareness of the tension between the *lokottara* and the *lokadharmi*. In this conflict, which starts to loom large towards the beginning of the Islamic age in India, the Sanskrit theorist perceived his role as the keeper of the *lokottara* view of art and literature, of the transcendental order established in classical India. The numerous textbooks on poetics produced during the first three centuries after Ghazni raided Somanath, reveal Sanskrit theorists fighting to save the orthodoxy in poetics. Arising from the fear of disintegration of their *lokottara*, world-view, is their obsession with the idea of synthesis. Meanwhile, life, and the *bhāṣā* literatures, had moved conclusively away from Sanskrit and *sanskriti*.

Rājaśekhara's literary career (ninth/tenth century)³⁴ forms an eloquent example of how poetics had started disintegrating as a meaningful cultural discourse in the tenth century. Born in Maharashtra, he migrated to Kanauj, as many of his learned contemporaries did, to become counsellor to two generations of princes. He is mainly remembered for his monumental work on poetics, *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, which classifies various branches of knowledge, defines literary concepts like *sūtra*, *bhāṣya*, *vṛtti*, *paddhati*, *tikā*, *samikṣā* (all of which were branches of criticism), and with illustrations explains other concepts like literature, syntax, metre, genres, semantics and linguistic. But mainly, Rājaśekhara's

Kāvyamīmāṃsā comments on the social purpose of literature and the sociological context of the writer. Its range of references is characteristically impressive—from writers like Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Hariścandra, and linguists like Pāṇini, Piṅgaḷa, Vararuci, to critics like Avantisundarī (Rājaśekhara's wife), Palyakīrti, Bharata, Maṅgaḷa, Rudraṭa, Vakpatirāja, Vāmana, Śyāmadeva, Surānanda, and so on. He is also known to have written poetry himself; and he has been described as being an excellent polyglot—*sarvabhāṣācatura*. His diplomatic career suggests that he knew some Latin, Arabic, Persian and an African dialect (known in India at that time as Romaka, Yavana, Parasika and Barbara, respectively). He certainly knew many of the Prakrit dialects. In *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* he offers detailed analyses of literatures in Paiśācī, Viḍharbhī, Gauḍīya, Pañcālī and Kāku, and a careful catalogue of various geographical regions, their dialects, intonations, socio-linguistic particulars and literary conventions. He himself wrote in two languages: his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* was written in Sanskrit, but *Karpurmañjirī*, a farcical play belonging to the *saṭṭaka* genre, was in his native Maḥarāṣṭrī, the precursor of Marāṭhī.

Rājaśekhara's life, and critical work, show that the need to take into account the new social forces, particularly the spirit of regionalism, prompted him to bend his theory towards a greater social realism, thus reflecting the tension between elitist poetics and populist literature, between Sanskrit and Prakrit. His enquiry into the sociology of writing, quite reminiscent of Bharata's analysis of the sociology of drama, indicates the beginning of the humanizing processes of Sanskrit poetics. The trend did not develop any further, for the Sanskrit language had become the target of the heresy institutionalized by the *bhāṣās*. Consequently, Rājaśekhara himself remained within the traditional framework of Sanskrit poetics. He did not propose a theory for the new *deśī* traditions of literature with which he was closely acquainted. In a curious way, Rājaśekhara's criticism is suspended between critical orthodoxy and literary heterodoxy. His *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* is the first Indian text in literary criticism to initiate what I have called the never-ending transition. This transition originates, to change Eisenstadt's terminology slightly, out of a tension between the *mārga* and the *deśī* views of literatures. To the extent that such a transition continues to exist as a cultural process even today, Rājaśekhara can be claimed as the precursor of *bhāṣā* criticism.

II

If Sanskrit criticism had attained a state of suspended animation, or more appropriately if it had been surviving on artificial respiration, and if the *bhāṣā* literatures had started gaining strength, it is difficult to understand why no *bhāṣā* ever developed the discipline of literary. Considering, however, that the *bhakti* movement in *bhāṣā* poetry—that covered a period extending from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth—had its own literary aesthetics (or ‘poetic’), a new class of audience, new modes of ‘publishing’ poetry, and its concept of *bhakti* as a *rasa*, it becomes necessary to amend the question, and to ask: Why did the *bhāṣā* literatures produce no critical document or text? There is no easy answer to this question, but the following comments may provide part of the explanation.

It has long been recognized that languages and regionalism have been interrelated in India, and that the relationships of any one region to Sanskrit on the one hand, and to its own *bhāṣā* on the other, have been different in nature.³⁵ Sanskrit, used only for the purpose of higher pursuits ever since the Aryans naturalized themselves in India, was distributed all over the country, including those parts that were using Dravidian languages for the business of this world. It was spread horizontally in a sense, all over India, without taking strong roots in any specific region. Only small groups of individuals in any particular area used it as a ‘living’ language. It was understood by only a small minority of the total Indian population. During the Indo-Islamic centuries, the prestige of Sanskrit, and its use, were further undermined. Communication through Sanskrit, therefore, took place in extended geographic space but was confined to small pockets of communities surrounded by non-Sanskrit speakers. Sanskrit did not have the same speech culture as the *bhāṣās* had. In such a situation, the spoken Sanskrit word was always in danger of perishing fast.

The Sanskrit writer or scholar was often engaged in carrying on a dialogue with the past. Śaṅkara ‘spoke’ to Buddha and Vyāsa,³⁶ Abhinava ‘spoke’ to Bharata,³⁷ and so on. I may add, in parenthesis, that some of the secrets of Indian culture lie hidden in the linguistic structure of the past tense in the Sanskrit language, a study of which should form a fascinating field for scholars of cultural anthropology. Here, it is necessary to note that the demands of scholarly disciplines, developed in Sanskrit over a millennium or more, and the need to communicate across rarefied social space,

made the composition of texts and their preservation in manuscript form imperative. The regional languages were free from these two compulsions, for they were 'living' languages, and communication through them was intended for a living and compact society. The distinction thus drawn between Sanskrit and the *bhāṣās* has a further evidence to support it in the form of details related to the technology of writing during the *bhāṣā* period.

During the age of classical Sanskrit literature, literary texts were passed on from generation to generation by committing them to memory. The ability to memorize was encouraged at school and university, and considered an essential part of knowledge acquisition. Remembering old texts was the criterion of one's learning, and the ability to remember conferred social dignity on a person. However, the texts were preserved in written form, too. They were periodically duplicated in manuscripts made of bark or dry leaves. With the advent of the *bhāṣās* these methods underwent a sociological as well as a technological change.

The sociological change occurred because the class and caste structures came under heavy attack from new sectarian movements, which, reflected in *bhakti* poetry, did not accept theological knowledge as a purely brahminic monopoly. Many non-brahmins started preaching their own realization of religious knowledge, through their poetry. In Marāṭhī, Nāmadeva (1270–1350) was a tailor by caste. He was surrounded by Gorā Kumbhār (potter), Saṃvatā Māli (gardener), Chokhā Mahār (untouchable), Senā Nhāvi (barber), and Janābai (a maid). Either because some of these poets themselves were illiterate or because they composed poems for the benefit of the illiterate classes of society, they preferred 'publishing' the poems as oral compositions rather than as written texts. They sang their poems to large gathering in temples, in places of pilgrimage or in the streets. The function of the text, and its place in the literary culture, had changed.

The technological change came with the use of paper for writing. Paper was known in India by the twelfth century. By the early fourteenth century, during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325–51), India was exporting paper and books to Iran and other Islamic nations. Historians tell us that this trade made the Iranian merchants in Delhi very prosperous.³⁸ It was now possible to make copies of texts easily. It was easier to write with ink on paper than with herbal dyes on leaves. The result was that during the *bhāṣā*

centuries of Indian literature preparing written texts had become a common practice. Perhaps the most famous example of this practice in Marāṭhī is that of the rigorously scholarly edition of Jñānadeva's *Jñāneśvari* prepared by Eknāth (1585). The new technology was probably used more by the elite Sanskrit writers whose appeal was limited to small numbers of readers. Thus, the new technology widened the gap that already existed between elite poetry and popular poetry.

Before the introduction of paper as a literary technology, the distinction between elite literature and folk literature was based on the clear criteria of 'written' poetry and 'oral' poetry. The poetry of *bhāṣās*, i.e., their mainstream poetry, was neither entirely written nor entirely oral. It was certainly consciously composed, and though many poets continued to operate orally, some actually wrote down their own verse. Moreover, *bhāṣā* poetry did not replace completely either the Sanskrit 'written' poetry or the regional 'folk' poetry. It was a cross between the two, and was an altogether new category of poetry. But it is necessary to add that the entire range of *bhāṣā* poetry was not of this type. It is possible, and also appropriate, to think of the three trends as smaller trends within *bhāṣā* poetry itself. A tabular representation of *bhāṣā* poetry may make the position clear. The categories accepted for classification are not adequate to describe the complexity (see p. 123). However, here I have used them for the sake of methodological convenience.

Tabular representation of Marāṭhī poetry between introduction of paper technology (13th century) and introduction of printing technology (18th century)

Type	Elite	Popular	Folk
Text	Written, and reproduced in written form.	Sometimes written but usually reproduced orally.	Oral. Recorded in written form subsequently.
Themes	Myths from Sanskrit literature, generally from the <i>Ramāyaṇa</i> or the <i>Mahābhārata</i> , but with scope for erotic descriptions, <i>smṛāra</i> .	Moral, philosophic and practical philosophy of life. Social themes, devotion.	Magic, racial memory, fantasy, etc. Heroics. Local history chronicles.

Type	Elite	Popular	Folk
Forms	<i>Chandas & Vṛttas</i> derived from the Sanskrit <i>Chandaśāstra</i> , episodic narrative, <i>Ākhyān</i> .	<i>Ovi, Abhanga, Bhajana, Kirtana</i> , lyrics or lyric sequences.	<i>Lāvṇi, Powāḍā, Bharud, Tamāśā</i> , songs.
Orien- tation & Influences	Oriented towards Brahminic traditons; influence of Sanskrit poetry and Sanskrit metric. Revivalistic.	Oriented towards contemporary society, progressive and revisionistic; influenced by Sufi mysticism to some extent, and by Marāṭhā nationalism.	Oriented towards entertainment, local history and sub-regional themes. Later influenced by Persian <i>ghazal</i> and diction.
Poetics	Articulated by Sanskrit poeticians, conventional.	Not articulated. But conventions of style, form, poet-audience relation, etc. were consciously evolved independent of Sanskrit traditions.	No articulated poetics. Conventions not very strong. But in folk-drama and bardic poetry poetry traces of old Sanskrit poetics can be located.
Represen- tative poets	Mukundarāja (13 th century) Moropant (18 th century)	Nāmadev (14 th century) Rāmdās (17 th century)	Honāji-Bālā (18 th century)

The table shows, with references to Marāṭhī, the relationship between the mode of writing and publishing poetry, and the kind of poetics implied by each tendency. It also shows the field of poetry distributed and fragmented on the basis of the method of communication, metrical patterns employed, and the poetics evolved by each of the tendencies tabulated. Between the introduction of paper technology (13th century) and the advent of printing technology (18th century), poetry developed in a great variety of unrelated ways, making a unidirectional poetics

inoperative; and so critical discourse also became fragmented. It is possible to show, by taking examples from literature in the other *bhāṣās* that the pattern is detectable in those languages too. Thus, the poetics of the classical period of Sanskrit poetry could be applied to elite, Sanskritic *bhāṣā* poetry, but was grossly inadequate for non-Sanskritic poetry.

The Mārga and the Deśi

The nature of literary fragmentation can be understood properly in the light of the fact that Indian society had developed a sophisticated cultural apparatus of intricately balancing various subcultures in relation to the mainstream culture. Perhaps the use of the terms ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ may help us in understanding this relationship.³⁹ The ‘horizontal’ culture and literature operated as the overarching patterns, within which individual ‘vertical’ patterns of culture were accommodated. In Sanskrit as well as in the *bhāṣās*, the term used for the overarching, horizontal pattern was *mārga*; for the local, vertical and subsumed pattern, *deśi*.⁴⁰ Etymologically, the distinction is believed to have originated in descriptive linguistics; linguistic geography described the regional languages or dialects and the language varieties as *deśi*, the standard language as *mārga*. Later, these terms were transferred to sociology and poetics. By the tenth century, they had come to be used as definite aesthetic categories. An important example of their use as aesthetic categories is to be found in Mātanga’s *Brhaddeśi*, a tenth century treatise on music.⁴¹ Mātanga classifies music into five types of *mārga gītis*, (*śuddha*, *bhinna*, *gaudi*, *raga* and *sādhāraṇi*) and in several other categories under the general heading of *deśi*. But this distinction was not based merely on variations between the national and the regional. Mātanga used the term *mārga*, we are told, to refer to “the ancient traditional musical material, whereas *deśi* refers to the music practices then current in the provinces.”⁴² Thus *mārga* was not only the mainstream but also the traditional, and *deśi*, not only the regional but also the contemporary. The relationship between the two was based on the principle of a healthy exchange. During its heyday, Sanskrit poetics had acknowledged the importance of regional variations in poetics and dramatic styles. Even a decadent Sanskrit theorist like Viśvanātha (fourteenth century) describes *deśi* styles such as *Gaudi*, *Vaidarbhi* and *Mahārāstri* in the ninth chapter of his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*.⁴³

A major classic on *deśī* language traditions is Hemacandra's *deśīnāmamālā* or *deśīṣabdasamgraha* (a dictionary of Prakrit) called *Rayanāvalī*. The dictionary lists 'provincialisms' of three types: (i) words not traced to Sanskrit origin, (ii) words of Sanskrit origin but with Prakrit semantic additions, and (iii) words of Prakrit origin and conventions. This passage from a recent commentary on Hemacandra illustrates the extent to which *deśī* coexisted harmoniously with *mārga* during the twelfth century:

The *deśīnāmamālā* is accompanied by a Sanskrit self-commentary of great merit, in which Hemacandra endeavours above all to explain his reasons for including or omitting certain words and for adopting or discarding certain spellings and meanings. Though this involves a good deal of polemics, he seldom divulges the names of the authorities with whom he is in harmony or at variance; those referred to specifically are the Prakrit lexicographers Abhimānacinha (with his scholiast Udukhalā), Gopāla, Devarāja, Droṇa, Dhanapāla, Pādalipta, Rāhulaka, and Śīlānka, the Prakrit poets Avantisundarī and Sātavāhana, the Sanskrit writers Bharata and Bhāmaha, and the Kālāpas or Kātantra grammarians, two anonymous quotations being from Halayudha's *Abhidhānaratnamālā*.⁴⁴

This impressive list of Hemacandra's intellectual debts should show a sense of belonging to both *mārga* and *deśī* traditions.

Traditionally, the exchange of ideas and intellectual or cultural movements between the *mārga* and the *deśī* traditions, or between one *deśī* tradition and another, took place through a system of cultural diffusion evolved all over India. The country's geography has been a crucial factor in determining its history and culture; and in this system of cultural transfer too, geography played a central role. The system has been described by geographers as "network oriented cultural geography".⁴⁵ Cities, universities, princely courts, places of pilgrimage; itinerant ascetics and scholars, and the armies constantly on the move, together performed the function of transfusing ideas from the *mārga* to the *deśī*, and the other way round. But the network structure also made cultural centres and intellectual conventions vulnerable to alien influences and threats.

This network of cultural transfusion nearly broke down when Mahmud of Ghazni started his raids on India.⁴⁶ The threat of

disintegration was intensified by an almost simultaneous decline of three powerful dynasties: the Palas, the Pratihāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Their armies had fought one another long enough to drain their treasuries, leaving the highways and roads in bad repair. In the changing political structure, the number of feudal vassals had increased enormously. This growth in the level of middlemen, characteristic of eleventh century politics, left both king and peasant—at either end of the chain linking production with administration—weaker than ever before. The damage to the communication network meant the assertion of regional cultures and languages over the dominant culture and language, and, at the same time, a self-defensive rigidity in the *mārga* tradition. Thus, with the advent of Islam in India, the *mārga* intellectual traditions stopped growing, though they survived in decadent forms for several centuries. On the other hand, the *deśī* traditions started growing in an unprecedented way, creating a new identity and a new cultural space for themselves. However, the aesthetic categories denoted by the terms *mārga* and *deśī* did not change so rapidly, though the traditions themselves had reversed their roles. This new situation had two very important consequences, which influenced the development of the *bhāṣā* literatures up to the arrival of the British.

The first consequence was an increasing dialogue among various regional literatures. While the possibility of cultural domination and mediation by Sanskrit was diminishing, the *bhāṣā* literatures established direct channels of communication with one another. Hence, we see many bilingual poets during these centuries: Nāmadeva (Marāṭhī and Panjābī), Vidyāpatī (Maithilī and Bāṅglā), Mīrā (Hindī and Gujarātī) and so on. For these bilingual writers, both the languages that they wrote in were of equal social status. Communication between the *mārga* and the *deśī*, on the other hand, was limited to mere translation or transliteration, as is indicated by the existence of several versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* written during the early centuries of the *bhāṣā* literatures. Similarly, there are numerous episodic poems based on themes from Sanskrit literature written in heavy conventional style. But this communication was no longer a living dialogue. The exchanges between one *bhāṣā* literature and another were more vital, and resulted, eventually, in the finest chapter in the story of Indian literature, namely, *bhakti* poetry.

The second consequence of the reversal of roles between the *mārga* and the *deśī* was the emergence of a hierarchy of literary

values. This hierarchy was over rigid and out of tune with the changing reality. Traditionally, the *mārga* traditions established literary criteria and aesthetic values for elitist literature. *Dēśī* designated rustic and vulgar literary expressions. Because of the growing rigidity of the self-defensive *mārga* traditions, the values associated with the national and the regional did not change in keeping with the changes in the significance of the traditions themselves. Thus, the stigma attached to *dēśī* as vulgar stuck even after major literary works were produced in the *bhāṣā* literatures. Sanskrit poetics had now to defend itself not only against the Indo-Islamic cultural invasions but also against the *bhāṣā* threat. Its instinct for self-preservation—in essence, the self-preservation of the brahminic class with which it was linked—helped Sanskrit to survive in a state of suspended animation till the seventeenth century. Inevitably, such anachronisms do enter a society that accommodates intellectual discourses fragmented by anomalous cultural pressures of the past and the present.

During the first millennium of Sanskrit poetics, critics like Bharata and Ānandavardhana had respected *lokadharmi*, or art related to socially sanctioned gestures, and had shown a lively intellectual interest in the *dēśīs*. In the remote past, at a time when Sanskrit had been a language spoken by the people, it was close to labour and life. *Ilā*, a word for speech in the *R̥gveda*, also meant ‘food’, and *Vāk*, a name of the muse *āpas*, meant ‘hard work’.⁴⁷ This rootedness of the language in productive life was naturally reflected in the poetics it developed. The openness of that system of poetics had already diminished with the late-classical formalism evident in the hair-splitting analysis of *dhvani* in the eleventh century. The post-classical decadence made the system more closed, and in consequence, the hierarchic value-structure became increasingly rigid. The vested interests of the brahminical intellectual classes were no less responsible for increasing the rigidity of the hierarchy and perpetuating the importance of *mārga* traditions, without counteracting their decadence in any creative way.

During the Indo-Islamic period, the *mārga* traditions were dominated by the Islamic cultural influence, and subverted by the rebellious sectarianism of the *dēśī* traditions. But during the initial phases of the British colonial rule in India, the *mārga* traditions received some very vigorous but artificial respiration from the European Indologists. There was obviously a consistency

between the political bearings of the *mārga* traditions and those of Indological cultural history. The hierarchic structures of values, in which a lower place was given to the self-respecting and rebellious *bhāṣās*, suited both well. On the other hand, the movement for freedom by the *deśī* traditions and the *bhāṣā* literatures was, ironically, a movement towards a greater regionalism, unaided by scientific progress or the development of a rational self-analysis. The transition, therefore, from the *mārga* to the *deśī* in the field of literary criticism remained unfinished.

Devotionalism and Discourse

A unique strategy evolved by the *bhāṣā* literatures to subvert the rigid conventions of over-stylized Sanskrit poetry, to confront the Brahminic monopoly of metaphysics and ethics, and to assert the identity of regional aspirations, was the aesthetics of *bhakti*.

Developed through poetry of extraordinary spontaneity, and in several *bhāṣās*, *bhakti* brought with it a radical social philosophy, and new metaphysics and aesthetics. It was, however, a movement and not a system. It had its own dynamics; but it never attempted a systematic theorizing of the values it upheld. In no other period in the entire history of Indian literature has literature been so intimately related to social life, or so fundamentally influenced it, as in the *bhakti* period. In reversing the established relation of hierarchy between the *mārga* and the *deśī* traditions, it rattled the bones of an already ossified society, and substantially changed its complexion.

It has been argued by two great modern Indian thinkers, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sri Aurobindo, that at the heart of Indian civilization is an aesthetic principle.⁴⁸ Their own work was directed towards the search of this principle: Coomaraswamy pursued it through his study of Indian arts and crafts, Sri Aurobindo through his exploration of mysticism. Taking up their line of argument, one can maintain that at the centre of Vedic society was the concept of *Vāk* (speech as an act and as abstraction) and its capacity to regulate the material universe. Similarly, during the late classical period, the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta was organized around the concepts of *spṛṣṭa* and *dhvani* (explosion and suggestion of meaning, or Meaning), especially in Śaṅkara's (b.788) *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. His pronouncement, *vācārmabhāṇam vikāro* ('creating is seizing with speech')⁴⁹ has been commented upon by innumerable Vedāntins. Śaṅkara's own comments on it are:

Of what nature then is the ‘word’ with a view to which it is said that the world originates from the ‘word’? It is the *sphoṭa*, the *purvapākṣin* says. For on the assumption that the individual gods, and so on, originate from the eternal words of the Veda could not in any way be proved since the letters perish as soon as they are produced ... it follows that the *sphoṭa* is the word. After the apprehending agent, i.e., the *buddhi*, has, through the apprehension of the several letters of the word, received rudimentary impressions, and after those impressions have been matured through the apprehension of the last letter, the *sphoṭa* presents itself in the *buddhi* all at once as the object of one mental act of apprehension ... As that *sphoṭa* is recognised as the same, as often as the word is pronounced it is eternal; ... From this eternal word, which is of the nature of *sphoṭa* and possesses denotative power, there is produced the object denoted, i.e., this world which consists of actions, agents, and results of action.⁵⁰

Sphoṭa was thus one of the most crucial concepts of Śaṅkara’s philosophy, which in turn was the most characteristic intellectual product of classical India. Like *vāk* and *sphoṭa* in the earlier millennia, *bhakti* came to occupy the centre-stage of Indian culture for nearly five centuries—from the fourteenth to the eighteenth. However, both *vāk* and *sphoṭa* were products of the *mārga* tradition, whereas *bhakti* originated in *deśī* traditions of the *bhāṣā* literatures. With it, the established cultural hierarchy is turned upside down.

An insight offered by the French scholar, Louis Renou (1896–1966), in his study of Mammaṭa’s poetics, helps to appreciate the magnitude of the changes implied in the *bhakti* movement. In his study of Mammaṭa’s *Kāvyaaprakāśa*, an eleventh century work on poetics, Renou establishes that there was a close correspondence between the grammatical forms employed by Mammaṭa and the substance of his poetics.⁵¹ Extending this argument, it follows that the continuous linguistic changes, and the continuing emergence and decline of languages in India, indicate a continuous and corresponding transition in the world-view. The emergence of *bhakti* poetry simultaneously with several new languages can, therefore, be seen as reflecting fundamental changes in India in the social, aesthetic and philosophical connotations of basic concept like Time, Language and Self.

Prior to the emergence of the *bhāṣā* literatures, the concept of Time in Indian tradition had two interpretations—one philosophic, the other mathematical. The philosophic conception is present in innumerable myths relating the creation and the progress of life, and also in philosophic treatises such as the fourth century Jain thinker Kundakunda's *Pravacanasāra*. He defines Time, with great sophistication, as a relative phenomenon:

As the dimensional points of space, so are the dimensional points of other substances (except time). The atom has no dimensional point, but hence is explained the developments of dimensional points. But a moment has no dimensional point. It occurs when a substance with a single dimensional point crosses a dimensional point of space.⁵²

As a mathematical measure, Time was presented both as a crude poeticism of cyclic progress (unfortunately thought to be the only perception of Time in India) as well as schematic and scientific linear progress. Perhaps the best record of these concepts is to be found in the memoirs of Al Beruni, an eleventh century Arabic thinker. Al Beruni recorded with amazing accuracy most of the intellectual developments in India around the year AD 1030. His areas of special interest were mathematics and astronomy. In a chapter entitled 'On the Dominants of the Different Measures of Time both Religious and Astronomical Relations and on Connected Subjects,' he mentions the prevalent schemes of measuring time in India:

Duration, or time in general, only applies to Creator as being *his* age, and not determinable by a beginning and an end. In fact, it is his eternity. They frequently call it *the soul*, i.e. *puruṣa*. But as regards common time, which is determined by motion, the single parts of it apply to beings beside *the soul*. Thus *kalpa* is always used in relation to Brahman, for it is his day and night, and his life is determined by it. Each *manvantara* has a special dominant called *Manu*, who is described by special qualities, already mentioned in a former chapter. On the other hand, I have never heard anything of dominants of the *catur-yugas* or *yugas*.⁵³

The last reference in Al Baruni is to the *sāṃkhya* view of the ‘inverted’ process of human evolution, from *satyayuga* to *kaliyuga*, from a luminous age to a dark age. It is worth noting that after the eleventh century *sāṃkhya* undergoes a revision in which the original concept of time is abandoned.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the emergence of the *bhāṣās* brings with it a new outlook to time. *Pasāyadāna*, the concluding section of *Jñāneśvarī*, expresses a strong hope for a better future for every human being. An accentuated sense of the future and the past as being distinct from the present moment start developing with the new languages. Historians tell us that a new kind of historical writing had started arising at this juncture from even small geographical areas, as for instance, Kashmir and Nepal.⁵⁵ Kalhana’s *Rājatarangīni* (twelfth century, Sanskrit), and Hemacandra’s *Parīṣṭaparvan* (twelfth century, Sanskrit) are well-known examples of history-based narratives. The arrival of Islam in India strengthened this interest in history to such an extent that we have an extraordinarily brilliant piece of historiography in the fourteenth century Ziaud-din Barni’s *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* (1357).

The new interest in history can be seen to indicate the new *bhāṣā* culture’s attempt to situate itself in a new and more pragmatic relation to Time and, thereby, to tradition. In a similar way, the *bhakti* era made radical revisions of the concepts of language and the self. The main thrust of *bhāṣā* culture was towards humanizing these and other related concepts. *Devabhāṣā* (divine speech), Sanskrit, was discarded by literatures in favour of *māṭr bhāṣā* (mother tongue), the vernaculars. The impersonal philosophic conception of the relation between *Brahman* and *ātman* (the Universal Principle and the Self) proposed by Śaṅkara was replaced by a more personal and intimate relation between the divine and the human, whereby a saint-poetess like Mīrā could claim the cowherd god, Kṛṣṇa, as her only mate (*Mere to Giridhara Gopāla, dūsaro na koi*). Even the matters of one’s inner life were perceived in terms of a family structure: Kṛṣṇa became the husband or the lover, Viṭṭhalas well as Jñānadeva became the mother, *māuli*, and the devotees became at times children, at other times playmates to Kṛṣṇa.

The concept of *bhakti* has received close attention in a recent psychoanalytical study of Indian society. Sudhir Kakar has commented on Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* at length in his study of Indian childhood, in which he interprets *bhakt* as a means of releasing the chaotic instincts from the inner world:

The psycho-social meaning of *bhakti* is that it provides for, and actually uses, 'democratic' fantasies in which the inner and outer repressions exacted by life in a rigidly structured and highly stratified social order are lifted. Traditional codes of conduct, and relationship between social groups, between generations, and especially between the sexes, are abrogated in Kṛṣṇa worship.⁵⁶

Kakar sees Kṛṣṇa symbolism as a device for releasing anarchic and instinctual forces from the psyche, and also of fulfilling the fantasies of a Utopian social order. This interpretation makes it clear that the tremendous wave of *bhakti* poetry, which swept India across all linguistic boundaries and over an extended temporal span, selected its central symbolism by no accident. It was a choice that vindicated the vertical, regional and *deśī* elements of culture against the hegemonic, and over-rigid *mārga* traditions. Of course, Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* was not the only kind of devotionism prevalent during that period. Poets like Tulsidās in Hindi and Rāmdās in Marāṭhī felt inspired to follow Rāma. The Sufi poets wrote about an idealized feminine principle; and in Marāṭhī a strong tradition of Datta-cult literature also emerged. However, it cannot be denied that the charismatic child god, Kṛṣṇa, provided the main paradigm for devotionism.

During the *bhakti* period, many local variations on Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* became popular in different regions of India. Various myths related to Kṛṣṇa's life were enshrined in cults developed round the important geographical focuses, Vrindavan and Mathura. In Maharashtra, the local form of Kṛṣṇa, Viṭṭhal or Viṭhobā, was worshipped. It was around Viṭhobā, the god in Pandharpur, that the *vāraṅkarī* sect grew, and assimilated in its body of scriptures the poetry of Jñānadeva, Nāmadeva, Eknāth and Tukārām, by far the greatest Marāṭhī poets. In most *bhāṣās* the story of Kṛṣṇa's life, and isolated episodes from it, particularly those that symbolized free play of libidinal and subconscious impulses, became a source of inspiration to poets. Numerous poems were written, for instance, on the romantic episode of Kṛṣṇa's wedding with Rukmiṇī. This tremendous upsurge of *bhakti* literature was the visible index of complex but fundamental changes taking place in Indian society during the high tide of Islamic rule. *Bhakti* was not a movement restricted to any one area of life. It was a composite concept and a pervasive movement, which mediaeval India posed as an alternative

to the hegemony of *mārga* traditions and to the excessively sophisticated system of Sanskrit poetics.

The development of the *bhakti* poetry was a natural consequence of the emergence of the *bhāṣā* literatures. *Bhakti* unleashed an emotionalism which classical Indian literature had held under the strict control of conventions and rigidly defined social ethics. In revolting against them, and in turning to an unrestrained emotionalism, *bhakti* made itself incapable of developing intellectual systems founded on rational thought. It had a revolutionary social and literary drive; but this spirit blossomed through symbolism and mysticism, and could not find the rational strength necessary to formulate intellectual discourse. Not surprisingly, therefore, *bhakti* had few theoreticians to systematize its poetics. There were some feeble attempts at introducing *bhakti* to the gamut of *rasas* established by Bharata in the fourth century, much before India had known gunpowder, paper and Islam.

In his *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata had proposed eight *rasas* as types of aesthetic emotion evoked by drama and poetry. The later Sanskrit theorists had started including in them in ninth *rasa*—the *śānta*—as the origination state of all *rasas* which an epic like the *Mahābhārata* could evoke. As a part of the ‘Sanskritization process’ of *bhakti* poetry, carried out by writers and mystics who felt emotionally closer to the Greater Tradition, attempts were made to include *bhakti* in the list of established *rasas*. The most important among the commentators who gave *bhaktirasa* a distinguished status was Rupa Goswāmi (1470–1554). In his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (1541–2)—the ocean of *bhakti*-nectar—Rupa Goswāmi proposed *bhakti* as aesthetic delight attained through *madhurā-rati*, the ecstasy of love and union with Kṛṣṇa. In describing the new *rasa* he used the entire apparatus of theory provided by Bharata and interpreted by Abhinavagupta. Predictably, therefore, no new theory of poetry was created from this extension of an old theory which was formulated originally twelve hundred years before Rupa Goswāmi’s times. During the long interval the meaning of most basic concepts had undergone several changes. For instance, Bharata had used *śṛṅgāra* (eros, or the man-woman relation) as one of the aesthetic emotions. In his time, elopement was accepted as a legitimate mode of *śṛṅgāra*. *Rākṣasavivāha*, a forced marriage, which must have been a relic of the colonial confrontation during the early centuries of Aryan advent in India, was accepted as a form of *śṛṅgāra*. But, by the time Ala-ud-din Khilji died (AD 1316), the

violations perpetrated by the alien armies had turned the substance of *śṛṅgāra* into that of *karuṇa*, or more correctly *śoka*, bemoaning. When *śṛṅgāra* was conceptualized, the man-woman relationship had a certain degree of natural freedom in society. But his freedom was almost lost during the early Islamic period which saw an increase in the crimes against woman *Rākṣasavivāha*, *Gandharavivāha*, etc., were the subject of the *śṛṅgāra* poetry previously. Now, however, such a *vivāha* could only be a violent or tragic experience. To use the apparatus of the *rasa* theory in this radically changed cultural context was a futile exercise. Needless to say, Rupa Goswāmi's theory did nothing more than to grant a Sanskritic legitimacy to *bhakti* literature. In the words of P. V. Kane, "Rupa Goswami was inspired ... to place the doctrine of *bhakti* concentrated on Kṛṣṇa into the garb and phraseology of the *rasa* theory."⁵⁷ His discussion of *rasa* was limited in scope and intent, and had no power to replace the earlier *rasa* and *dhvani* theories of Sanskrit poetics.

Since the sole aim of *bhakti* poetry was to challenge the *mārga* traditions, traditions of logically rigorous philosophic systems, its attitude to theory was one of indifference. It tried every kind of experimentation with style and diction, and replaced every established convention of poetry; but it never tried to formulate a statement of the new conventions of poetry. When such statements were made at all, by scholars reared on Sanskrit intellectual traditions, they were too inclusive and theoretically weak. Madhusūdan Saraswati's *Bhaktirasāyana* was one such statement. Commenting on it, R. B. Patankar points out that it obfuscates the concept of 'universalization' (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*), which was well defined in classical Sanskrit poetics. Patankar writes:

In everyday life we see Duśyanta as an individual; in dramatic experience we apprehend the universalized Dusyanta, that is not Duśyanta at all but man as such. But what universalization is conceivable in the case of Kṛṣṇa, who, even outside the domain of poetry and drama is already universalized? *Bhakti* with Kṛṣṇa as its object automatically becomes *bhakti-rasa*; a *bhakta* automatically becomes a *rasika*. If unmixed pleasure (*ānanda*) is made the distinguishing mark of literary experience, *bhakti-rasa* becomes the supreme *rasa*, because Kṛṣṇa, as the ultimate substratum of the universe, is of the nature of unmixed *ānanda*.⁵⁸

Bhaktirasa, therefore, could have become a viable literary theory in the context of *bhakti* poetry, had it solved the problem of ‘universalization’, as Bharata had done earlier with reference to other aesthetic emotions. The theoreticians of *bhakti* poetry did not have that philosophic rigour. Their aim was restricted to using the traditional Indian device of turning all new experiences into archaic stuff, a device of extending *paramparā*, the hoary tradition.

As a consequence of the theoretical ineptitude of *bhakti* literature combined with the rigidity of Sanskrit poetics, literary criticism in India has ceased to be a unified field of intellectual discourse ever since the emergence of the *bhāṣā* literatures. It may be necessary here to define the term ‘discourse’, since it is variously used in current critical diction. I find the oldest definition of the term, offered by Pāṇini in his *Sūtrapāṭha* (4th century BC), adequate for the present purpose. It is implied in the following debate:

Purvapakṣin: What is meant by *Upadiṣṭa*?

Siddhapakṣin: Uttered.

P.: How does it come to mean that: ... By whom uttered?

S.: By the *śiṣṭhas*.

P.: Who are the *śiṣṭhas*?

S.: The grammarians.

P.: How so?

S.: The character of a *śiṣṭha* is conferred upon one by the knowledge of the science (*śāstra*); and the grammarians know the science (of grammar).

P.: If a man is made *śiṣṭha* by the science, and the science depends on a man’s being *śiṣṭha*, this is reasoning in a circle. An argument in a circle does not hold ...

S.: Well, then, the character of a *śiṣṭha* is conferred upon one by the country in which he lives.⁵⁹

What Pāṇini says here is that knowledge does not gain its status as knowledge unless it has a social sanction to acquire that status. Intellectual discourses are socially legitimated systems, which are also ‘*upadiṣṭa*’ or well-ordered. Pāṇini’s discussion is about the system of knowledge of languages. He mentions three minimum conditions of a discourse: it must contain knowledge about something outside itself, it must be well-ordered, and it must receive social legitimacy as a system of knowledge. Accepting this

as an adequate definition of 'discourse' it can be said that literary criticism attains the status of an intellectual discourse when it stands on the point of intersection of an existing body of literature, a logically formulated theory, and a society's acceptance of the correspondence between these two.

The *bhakti* movement generated a substantial body of literature marked by an intense devotionism without a self-conscious intellectual discourse of criticism originating from it. The movement did not initiate a new theory of literature, primarily due to a breakdown in the intricate network of the *mārga* and the *deśī* traditions. Sociologically, devotional poetry was a challenge posed by the oppressed classes to the brahminical monopoly of cultural and scriptural knowledge. The challenge, however, did not make a dent in the formal system of knowledge transmission.

All through the middle centuries of Indian history, as in the classical period, formal education in schools and centres of higher learning was under the control of brahminical classes. This grip was tightened in reaction to the upsurge of *bhakti*. During the preceding ages, Indian philosophies and intellectual movements had sought and secured a respectable academic status. For instance, thinkers like Pāṇini and Śaṅkara had carefully laid down the pedagogic methods to be followed to transmit their thoughts to the future generations. As against this scrupulous academic interest, the *bhakti* poets thought of formal scholarly training as a stumbling block in the way of perceiving the truth of life, and as a rigid outmoded form that was unwilling to assimilate the new perception of life. One of the innumerable examples of this irreverent attitude to formalized education is to be found in Rāmdās's *Dāsabodha*. In the hauntingly beautiful verses (forty-one in all) of the tenth section of the second books of his *opus*, the seventeenth century Marāṭhī saint-poet describes the attributes of *paḍhatmurkha*, a person embodying knowledge without wisdom. Here is one: "*Nāhi bhaktice sādhan, nāhi vairāgya nā bhajan, kriyeviṇa bole brahmagñāna, to eka paḍhatmurkha*" (a bookish fool is one who knows all mapped knowledge without an iota of *bhakti*, *vairāgya*, *bhajana* and deed).⁶⁰

The prevalent patterns of patronage intensified this class war in literature. The political structures dominant during the *bhakti* centuries were feudalistic, and, though dissent within the overall central structure of the subcontinent feature of political history, dissent at the popular level was dreaded equally by all rulers. *Bhakti* literature,

therefore, was not welcomed by the class capable of providing political patronage to literature. One extreme example of this political opposition to *bhakti* literature is that of Sikh extermination after Nānak inspired his people through his poetry. The other, preceding it by five centuries, is that of the cruel feudal attacks on the Kannaḍa *Vīśāiva* sect inspired by Allamā Prabhu and Basavaṇṇa. In many of Basavaṇṇa's poems we get glimpses of the tyranny:

I went to fornicate,
but all I got was conterfeit.
I went behind a ruined wall,
but scorpions stung me.
The watchman who heard my screams
just peeled off my clothes.
I went home in shame,
my husband raised weals on my back.
All the rest, O lord of the meeting rivers,
the king took for his fines.⁶¹

It would be more appropriate, perhaps, to say that the *mārga* tradition accepted only the theological content of *bhakti*, neglecting its rebellious spirituality. Hence, the ruling classes continued to provide uninterrupted patronage to Sanskrit-based formal education all through the middle centuries. Persian and Arabic were added to Sanskrit when the patronage was administrated by the Islamic rulers. In other words, formal education belonged to *mārga*, while the experience of life's complexities was perceived and articulated through *deśī* idiolects.

The gap between lived experience and formalized knowledge was at the root of the non-emergence of critical discourse relevant to *bhakti* literature. Literature was being produced in the *bhāṣās*, criticism continued to survive through Sanskrit and the fragmented community of writers and scholars came to value in both that which was convenient to value. The modern mind, reared on Western paradigms of literary history, may find this situation difficult to grasp. The established view of this situation describes it in terms of a failure, a sickness, a vacuum, and an inability. However, given that the *bhāṣās* produced first-rate literature and they were not entirely innocent of criticism as a discipline, it would not be correct to maintain that Indian literature had lost, for a period of half a

millennium, its critical sensibility. It would be more appropriate to say that criticism did not become a discourse, a monolingual system of intellectual premises about literature; but it remained a multicultural and multilingual enterprise. Multiculturalism and multilingualism need not be seen as symptoms of a great cultural failure and sickness merely because they have no parallels in Western literary history. They were at first political and social necessities, and were invested with legitimacy and practical utility by devotionism. This has, in fact, been a unique contribution in the *bhakti* period to Indian literary sensibility. *Bhakti* literature itself was perfectly at ease with such multilingualism. The sense of guilt attached to it is an element that was introduced in the Indian sensibility during the British colonial period, particularly after English education was introduced in India. However, at the time of the initial contact with the British, the Indian mind considered multiculturalism and multilingualism as natural conditions of existence, and continued to strive to maintain them as such even during the high period of Indian nationalism which was inspired by Europe's monolingual monocultural nationalism. We will now see how Indians collaborated with the British so as to preserve the native tradition of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Colonial Structure: The City and the Cantonment

A distinctive feature of the British colonial rule in India was its reluctance to penetrate the interiors of Indian land and society. The colonial British valued the pragmatic concern of preserving their own cultural identity more than the idealistic concern of captivating Indian culture. When cultural influences were exerted in a conscious way, the reasons were always pragmatic and material. On the other hand, Indians developed their own insidious and subversive ways of receiving the alien influence, again for pragmatic reasons. The cultural encounter, therefore, was an elaborate pattern of collaboration and confrontation. The most essential feature of the Anglo-Indian colonial structure was its tolerance of dualities and unwillingness to make extreme choices.

In the initial stages of the East India Company's expansion (1616–1757), the British settlements were restricted to coastal trading posts such as Surat, Bombay, Cochin, Madras and Calcutta. Bengal came under the Company's indirect rule with Clive's success at the battle of Plassey in 1757. It should interest students of

colonial culture that the system of government established by Clive was known as the Dual System, under which the administrative power was in the hands of the Nabob, and the military and free trade powers in the control of the Company. Duality continued to be characteristic of many subsequent encounters during the entire colonial period. The British dominion over India was conclusively established by 1818, the year that marks the end of Marāṭhā resistance. Yet, a large number of independent princely states, only indirectly controlled by the British, continued to criss-cross the map of British India. The British retained this political division during the ninety years of the high colonial rule—from the Revolt in 1857 to Independence in 1947. During this phase, the territory of India was divided into British India, governed directly by the British administration in India, and Princely India, consisting of 362 states with whom the British had drawn political treaties of various kinds. Though the princely states have been merged with the Union of India after 1947, the federal structure of government, which distributes authority between the Union and State governments, continues to show clear links with the Dual System of Clive. When it was first introduced in Bengal, the Dual System was not an established Western idea, and the idea was not to be found in any European textbook of political economy. It was worked out indigenously, in the crucible of colonial Bengal—a joint venture between the colonial British and the colonial Indians, and to that extent an India concept. No other British colony developed such an idea. It became a possibility due to the Indian contribution to it through a willing collaboration.

This collaborative relation came to an end with the revolt of 1857, and the encounter acquired a complex character of collaboration as well as confrontation. Prior to that, the relationship between the colonial British and ruling Indian classes was one of equal partners/rivals in trade and plunder, in which both sides had decided not to interfere with each other except at the level of certain pragmatic concerns. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the colonial context provided a coexistence that was free of cultural tensions. In fact, it was bound by an utter distrust of each other. The typical colonial British never could trust Indians, or those other British who trusted Indians. James Mill thought, for instance, that William Jones had no learning on Sanskrit, that he never read the *Rāmāyaṇa* though he praised it so lavishly.⁶² Indians, on the other

side, never ceased to treat the British as alien people. William Hawkins, the first emissary of the Company, stationed at Surat, was despised by the local inhabitants and on occasion had to lock himself in to protect himself from Mughal soldiers.⁶³

Early in the encounter, both the Indians and the British seem to have decided to build a relationship that was merely functional—a mixture of indifference and distrust—and to have no relationship beyond the merely economic and military. A self-consciousness about the nature of this relationship, in which both sides collaborated, resulted in a cultural relation which can be described aphoristically as ‘city and cantonment structure’. It may be added in passing that English dictionaries describe the word ‘cantonment’ as being of Indian origin.⁶⁴ Like the Dual System, to which it is ideologically related, the cantonment style of town planning is a distinctive feature of the British colonial rule in India.

It was evident from the very early stages of the colonel encounter that the British had little sympathy for Indian art and architecture. Sir Thomas Roe, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury, strikes the keynote of this attitude:

The buildings are all base of mud, one story high, except in Surat, where there are some of stone. The Emperor’s own houses are of stone, handsome and uniform. The great men build not, for want of inheritance; but as far as I have yet seen, live in tents, or houses worse than cottages.⁶⁵

Had he soon less unsympathetic, he could not have missed the use of the *pietre dure* inlays in the royal buildings, designed after some of the most splendid buildings at Florence. A few decades later, Bernier (the French traveller to previously) could not stop wondering at “jaspers, *jachen*, or jade, as well as other stones” embellishing Indian architecture.⁶⁶ The negative attitude continued to dominate the British view of Indian housing till the days of James Mill and even John Ruskin. Mill reproduced Roe’s letter on the first page of his *History of British India* (1826),⁶⁷ and Ruskin was left cold by the intricate embellishments of Indian art.⁶⁸ The result was that the British introduced their own style of architecture, of which the cantonment style was the more pragmatic manifestation.

Architecture is, with painting and literature, an area to which the British made a substantial contribution in India. But the colonial

architecture was not a result of the pure love of that art. The Mughals had been magnificent builders; and architecture was in an advanced stage of development when the British came to India. However, most palaces, public buildings and fortified posts of district and state administration built by the Mughals, Marāṭhās and Rājputs before the arrival of the British, were left almost completely unused by the British. In Delhi itself, the Red Fort built during the seventeenth century was not occupied by the British (except for some symbolic administrative functions) in the same way as it was occupied by the Mughals before them. Instead of occupying the traditional Indian office buildings, the British created cantonment areas. The British rulers never saw themselves in the role of 'new Mughals', though they imitated the traditional pomp and held occasional durbars. Total captivation of Indian culture and society had never been their aim. Thus, British architecture and town planning were organically linked with their political enterprise in India.

Another area in which the British jealously guarded their racial identity was sex relations. The Islamic rulers took as many wives as they could in India. The British, on the other hand, tried to prohibit, to the extent it was possible, sexual contact between the ruling race and Indians. Special laws were made, and were strictly enforced, for this purpose. If we mix Nandy's metaphor of sexual politics, used to describe colonialism, with the actual attitude of the British to sex, it can be said that the British displayed a keen interest in making the cultural relation completely non-productive.

One of the most embarrassing episodes in the social history of the raj was the case of Fanny Epstein⁶⁹ which attracted wide public attention in 1891. Through circumstances stranger than in fiction, Fanny arrived in Bombay, leaving behind a worried father in London. In Bombay's Kamathipura area she settled down to the life of a common prostitute. There used to be European girls specially encouraged to engage in the trade for benefit of the white races. But Fanny opened her doors to the natives of Bombay too. This act agitated the Bombay government so much that she was promptly repatriated to London. This fear of sexual relation with the native operated not only in the area of relationship between British females and Indian males, it also governed the area of relationship between British males and Indian females. After all, the total 'Anglo-Indian' population (or 'Eurasian' population as it was called before the first census in 1891) was minuscule, considering the length of the

contact between the British and the Indians, at the time the British left India. The British fear of establishing sexual relations with Indians, correctly reflects the British unwillingness to participate in the ongoing cultural processes within the colonial India.

Kenneth Ballhatchet has made a probing study of race and sex relations during the British colonial period in India. He records:

The cantonments provided an ordered environment, within which the British soldier could be protected from unsettling contact with Indian life. Most soldiers seem to have accepted the situation, and to have assumed with their world the privileged role of the member of the ruling race. They employed Indian servants, and felt the sexual jealousy characteristic of males of dominant group ... the military police would as a matter of course turn Indian males out of brothels used by British soldiers; it seemed only proper to do so. Some soldiers, however, defied convention to the extent of declaring their intention of marrying Indian or Eurasian women. But to the end of British rule the authorities would discourage such unions. All members of the ruling race were supposed to keep their distance.⁷⁰

Not taking Indian wives, not taking over Indian houses and buildings, segregation, and cantonment structure—all were facets of one basic attitude towards India. It was a wholly amoral, dehumanized and pragmatic attitude in which India was no more than a source of continuous economic gains. The Indian mind, trained by the multiculturalism of preceding centuries, saw through this game with clarity, and with an equal degree of pragmatism learnt to play the game to its advantage.

It is generally believed that the demand for English education came from Indian leaders like Rammohun Roy. Likewise, it is known that the nineteenth century witnessed an active debate centering round the theme of tradition versus Westernization. But a study of the sociological and psychological reasons for this has not been attempted. It is certain that though Indians asked for English education, they did not do so for a thorough Westernization. To have it was to have, figuratively speaking, an access to the life in cantonment. Arthur Mayhew, a sharp observer of Indian psychology, states this while commenting on education and Indian culture:

When we think of what, through our instruction, the Indian can do and must do to gain a livelihood, we imagine him in his government or mercantile office, pleading in the law courts, practising in the hospitals, and even doing in executive council or ministries the work that, for a century, has been reserved to the 'Heaven-born' of the civil Service. Here he is Western and one with us. ... If we follow the clerk home from his office, or the agricultural labourer, who has achieved literacy in the village school, home from the plough, and watch ... we shall find the Oriental, not the Occidental. It is not merely a change from professional attire to the loincloth of domestic life. Practically everything is shed that has been acquired at such cost from school and college and contact with the West. ... You may talk with the educated Hindu pleasantly and profitably about his official or professional life ... but the ordinary European will fail to find out what he really cares for as a man, what essentially gives value to his life as a whole, what constitutes his real self ... The professor of English will not talk about his personal and intimate debt to that literature. For it does not intrude into his personal and domestic life.

Mayhew's comments make it clear that the city-cantonment structure of the colonial culture suited the Hindu Indian as much as it did the colonial British administrator. The collaboration of the two in developing and preserving the structure is the theme of many perceptive works of fiction written about colonial India. In E. M. Forster's words, what connected the city and the cantonment was just 'the overarching sky'.⁷²

The cantonment mentality was no mere quirk of the British mind. It was a calculated strategy to control the vast country with a minimum of expense on administrative machinery. All through the colonial period the British presence in India was very small in number. Nearly a century after Hawkins landed at Surat, the entire British population at a major trade centre like Madras had only one hundred and fourteen civilians and some three hundred soldiers. By the middle of the eighteenth century it was "more or less a settled policy that India should be a closed land to British subjects having no official connections."⁷³ British-born subjects were prohibited from holding land in India after 1766, and required a licence to go to India after 1783 according to laws passed in the British Parliament.

In 1833, the exact number of British soldiers in India was 36,422; that of civil servants, 1,055; and of private civilians a mere 2,687. In 1931, when a vast popular movement threatened the British empire, there were 100,000 British in India, of whom the army personnel accounted for 70,000 and civilians 30,000.⁷⁴ In order to control a vast country like India with the help of such a small number of British persons, it was necessary to project a frighteningly masculine image. The colony was always like a war camp, where only the young and fit-to-fight were sent. Edmund Burke had once remarked that “there was one sight never seen in India, and that was the grey head of an Englishman.”⁷⁵

The cantonment thus became the symbol of youth, vitality, masculinity and power. It was the colonial symbol of the dominating male ego. But the cantonment was no ‘home’. One died there fighting, not in a bed. There was, therefore, no need to strike deep roots during the transitory cantonment existence. The city, on the other hand, had come to be the symbol of defeat, demoralization, weakness and femininity. It had its own ways of meeting the challenges to its identity and existence posed by the cantonment. Ashis Nandy has employed the metaphor of sexual politics to analyze the colonial psychology. He argues that the British worked within an epistemological structure of biologically stratified relations, and that India did not change the bipolarity of this relation but only the stratification implied. He comments:

It was in this sense that Gandhi wanted to liberate the British as much as he wanted to liberate Indians ... he challenged first the ideology of biological stratification acting as a homology of—and legacy for—political inequality and injustice ... the colonial culture’s ordering of sexual identity and injustice ... the colonial culture’s ordering of sexual identities assumed that ... manliness is superior to womanliness, and womanliness to femininity in man ... Gandhi used two orderings, each of which could be invoked according to the needs of the situation. The first, borrowed intact from the great and little traditions of saintliness in India ... was that manliness and womanliness are equal, but the ability to transcend the man-woman dichotomy is superior to both. Gandhi’s second ordering was invoked specifically as a methodological justification for the anti-imperialist movement

... the essence of femininity is superior to that of masculinity, which in turn is better than cowardice.⁷⁶

The city and cantonment structure, with its politics of sex, race and culture, formed the essential typology of cultural relations in colonial India. Indians, with their experience of multiculturalism in the past, were able to face the colonial situation with maturity. The dual system of values itself became their weapon to fight colonialism in every area of culture, including literary criticism.

The Duality of Law

It would be instructive to study a specific example of how Indians used the stratified dual structure for their own benefit, particularly an example that has a bearing on literary criticism. The example that I wish to present is that of the legal system, for it may form an apt analogy for criticism—which is a system of principles legislating literature. One of the first problems that the East India Company faced, after taking over from the Nabob, was related to the kind of legal system to be put in use. Nathaniel Halhed was asked, therefore, by Warren Hastings to prepare a special English commentary on Hindu law. Halhed's rendering was published in 1776 under the title *A Code of Gentoo Law*.⁷⁷ And less than four months after taking charge of his position in Calcutta, Hastings himself prepared what is known as the Judicial Plan of 1772, according to which, "in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste, and other religious usages, or institutions, the laws of the Koran with respect to Mahometans and those of the Shaster with respect to Gentoos shall be invariably adhered to."⁷⁸ This was a pragmatic legal principle. But it would have proved economically unprofitable had it been applied to land disputes too. Hence, with respect to land and property disputes, the Company decided to accept law derived from the existing British model.

Since India already had well established administrative and fiscal law, when the Company established its government the problem of making a choice between the Indian legal system and the British legal system had to be faced. As a commentator remarks:

"The impact of Western civilization," says W. A. Robson, "in the shape of the officials of the East India Company, on these ancient and divinely inspired systems of Hindu and

Muhammadden law, formed one of the most dramatic juridical conflicts ever witnessed by the modern world.” Obviously this was the logical sequel to the Battle of Plassey which ultimately established British political authority and brought in its wake the British judicial system as well.”⁷⁹

As stated above, the Company government settled for a dual system of law. The legal system inherited by free India has its origin in the late eighteenth century Bengal.

From among the studies of Indian legal system from a sociological perspective made in recent years, Oliver Mendelsohn’s contribution⁸⁰ is highly relevant to our discussion. Mendelsohn builds his argument on two earlier studies, by Bernard Cohn⁸¹ and Robert Kidder.⁸² Cohn has argued that in attempting to introduce British procedural law into their Indian courts, the British confronted the Indians with a situation in which there was a direct clash of values of the two societies; and the Indians, in response, thought only of manipulating the new situation, and did not use the courts to settle disputes but only to further them. Kidder has argued, on the other hand, that the legal system inherited from the British does not adequately reflect Indian values, and therefore, fails to be effective. Mendelsohn, while deviating from both these views, points to the land factor involved in the bulk of the legal disputes and suggest that it is “the character of land relations in Indian village society which has inhibited the Western-style courts from effectively settling these disputes.”⁸³ By using a case study to support his argument, he establishes that the Indian peasant uses the communal law when quick results are expected, and the Western-style court when the results have to be delayed:

The distinctive character of the Anglo-Indian judicial system emerged through the medium of the most cherished foundations of British law, the rigorous procedures designed to promote justice. British, indeed all Western style, courts are essentially cautious institutions: they are authorised to give judgement for one or the other party—there can never be a compromise ... only after each side had an opportunity to put its case. It is these procedures and rights which have been systematically distorted in the Indian case.⁸⁴

What is suggested here, through a sociologist's observations, is an image of the Indian peasant as a successful manipulator of the city and cantonment value scale in the legal sphere to suit his practical needs to life.

A recognition of the Indian capacity to manipulate two distinct legal structure would reveal the ability to accommodate bipolar cultural systems, and to use them according to convenience. This traditional capacity to accept cultural duality has been finely sharpened by the colonial experience. It may indicate that the fear-psychosis and the sense of crisis, with which Indian criticism is gripped, and the tension caused by being 'torn' between 'Westernization' and 'Sanskritization', are epistemological rather than ontological features of Indian criticism.

After Amnesia

The Tripartite Relation

The key terms that appear in any account of modern Indian criticism are 'colonialism', 'Renaissance', 'modernity' and 'Westernization'. The logic behind the use of these terms is that colonialism triggered off the Indian Renaissance, and that one impact of Westernization on literature was to endow it with modernity. It is assumed that the colonial impact caused the Indian attempt at a grand synthesis of the East and West, now termed 'Renaissance', and that the assimilation of Western literary forms and critical paradigms led to the assertion of self-identity and modern self-awareness in Indian literature. In order to examine the validity of these assumptions, first it would be necessary to distinguish their utility in the sphere of creative literature from that in the field of literary criticism. The reason for this distinction is that while creative literature in India has been continuously flourishing, criticism shows little signs of catching up with it. That has been the Indian experience from the beginning of the *bhāṣā* literatures. In the context of literary criticism, the accepted assumptions about the relation between colonialism and Renaissance, and between Westernization and modernity, need to be challenged. Had the Renaissance effected a real transformation and produced an organic synthesis, the modern Indian critic could have thought in terms of a modern Indian tradition of literary criticism. The synthesis was, in reality, a hotchpotch of ideas drawn from a wide range of cultural and chronological sources. This haphazard mixture of ideas acquired value within the colonial context. It is in this sense that colonialism and the Renaissance were interrelated.

In a study of modern Indian aesthetics, S. K. Nandi¹ has discussed the literary aesthetics of Rabindranath Tagore, Brajendranath Seal, Sri Aurobindo and Abanindranath Tagore. Uniformly in the critical

thought of all four, Nandi finds kinship with 'the ancient Indian ideas on art and beauty', as also with Spinoza, Croce and others in the West. His concluding remarks are:

Thus the philosophies of art and beauty as found in the two Tagores, and in Brajendranath and Sri Aurobindo were very much allied in their fundamentals as they borrowed from the same storehouse of Indian civilization and culture ... these Indian thinkers line up with the most ardent logical minds of the West who ever thought and wrote on aesthetic problems in recent past.²

The four critics studied by Nandi belonged to the Indian Renaissance period, the historical boundaries of which have not yet been thoroughly debated or defined. It is difficult not to admire the quality of intelligence that has gone into the making of their critical writings. How is it that, in spite of their individual talents, they attempted a synthesis that was bound to fail? To answer this question it would be more fruitful to study the process of value acquisition at work in their writing than to examine the ideas employed there. It will be useful to see what made them undertake the synthesis, or select the specific cultural form of criticism.

It is an accepted principle in cultural anthropology as well as in economics that generally whatever is useful acquires value. The significance attached to literary criticism in the total spectrum of a nation's culture by the English critics Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis was an outcome of a long tradition of the usefulness of criticism in English society. As Joan Simon points out in a study of the social origins of English education, the education of the seven 'liberal' arts—grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy—was a device of self-transformation for the mediaeval English society.³ Though grammar and classical literature were taught in mediaeval England at the university level, literary criticism came to be recognized as an area of study only after land ceiling acts of seminar importance started disrupting the society to create sharply divided class structures. It was towards the middle of the eighteenth century that literary criticism acquired the status of a valued cultural form in England. In a radical reinterpretation of the English critical tradition, Terry Eagleton has shown how criticism was a tool of social protest in the eighteenth century, and then how it

acquired the status as a class 'possession'.⁴ With him we can say that criticism was of vital importance to Arnold and Leavis because of its ideological placement and usefulness. To this argument it is possible to add one more strand from the Indian perspective. Eagleton says about the rise of 'English' as an academic discipline:

'English' as an academic subject was first institutionalized not in the Universities, but in the Mechanics' Institutes, working men's colleges and extension lecturing circuits. English was literary the poor man's Classics ... [with] emphasis on solidarity between the social classes, the cultivation of 'larger sympathies', the installation of national pride and the transmission of 'moral' values ... indeed the rise of 'English' is more or less concomitant with an historic shift in the very meaning of the term 'moral', of which Arnold, Henry James and F. R. Leavis are the major critical exponents.⁵

In fact, the expansion of British colonial power is as important a reason for the gain of status by 'English' as the social conflict inherent in the class structure. English criticism, which was a feeble branch of English literature up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, subsequently acquired great significance because the colonies provided a ready and vast market for critical texts. 'English' was after all a basic theme in the imperialistic enterprise as it was in the Victorian class rift. In order to educate the colonies in the finer points of English literature it was necessary to export a large number of commentaries on English writers. The steady decline in the philosophic substance of English criticism, from Shelley's *Defence*, through Arnold's *Study*, to Leavis's text/author based assessment, has to be ascribed to the rising need in the colonies for critical commentaries on authors and texts. A historical perspective shows that English literary criticism, and by extension European literary criticism, developed and acquired value due to its usefulness. During the colonial period it became a valued marketable commodity, a pragmatic cultural form.

The nature of 'value' that literary criticism had in England underwent a major shift when 'English' was introduced in the Indian education system. From being merely a valuable commodity it now became a value-giving acquisition. Education in English literature lent value to the person who had received it, who himself became

a commodity in the job-market created by the colonial government. While the intention of the Indian leaders who sought English education was to gain access to the English mind, the objective of the British in providing it was to win loyalty from their colonial subjects. Neither succeeded fully. But this collaborative effort certainly enhanced the value of English literary education and, thereby, the discipline of literary criticism. Since that education worked as a channel to draw the 'natives' into the colonial market system, creating a class of culturally displaced Indians, such a displacement came to be valued. Imitating Arnold, Leavis, etc., this class then started maintaining that literary criticism is an index of a healthy culture. Thus, in India, literary criticism of the Western type was pressed into use *after* it came to acquire value.

Critical theories and trends in the West had originated in their specific local contexts. Their spread through the machinery of the colonial education system created a climate of literary views which seems, in retrospect, quite absurd. For instance, the Romantic prose writers had received some moderate praise from their contemporaries for the individuality of their prose styles, but apart from being highly interesting they had not contributed much to the tradition of English literature in terms of a new diction, syntax or concept of literary language. But these, particularly Thomas Carlyle and Charles Lamb, were taught in India as models of prose writing. Framed in colonial pedagogy, these 'interesting' writers of English became 'good' prose writers of universal significance. Drilled in Carlyle and Scott, the Indian writers of *bhāṣā* literature too, started writing in that style, producing prose that was hardly readable. Thus, the inadequacy of the concept of prose style in English—which continued till the time of the Russian Formalism and French Structuralism—was nicely packaged and sold to the colonial literary market as a substance of great value.

The colonial framework created one more absurdity—that of a thoughtless anachronism in critical practice. Western criticism has passed through four major stages of development, as M. H. Abrams argues: (i) Mimetic, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and the cosmos (ii) Pragmatic, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and the audience (iii) Expressive, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and the writer (iv) Autonomous, with theories focusing on literature as a sovereign ontological object.⁶ This progression of Western theories took place

within a time frame of nearly two thousand years. Since the colonial background invested everything Western with a positive value, Indian literary criticism started employing components of all four types of literary theory without regard to the history of their origins.

We can see in the *bhāṣā* criticism of the colonial period a simultaneous presence of the mimetic ideas of structure, the pragmatic ideas of style, the expressive ideas of the poetic imagination, and the autonomous ideas of form. Since all these ideas were Western, they were thought to be universally useful and valuable. In reality, these ideas had originated in the context of divergent metaphysical and social perceptions. The mimetic theories were formed within the framework of Platonism, the didactic concepts were based on the Ptolemaic cosmogony. The expressive aesthetics came as a culmination, even as a reaction, to Newtonian physics and Bacon's logic.⁷ And the autonomous poetics had developed out of a growing relativism in physics and pluralism in philosophy. These obvious distinctions were overlooked by the colonial Indian critic not because he had no intellectual capacity to notice them but because the theorizing about literature was seen as a sign of cultural vitality.

Most of the Indian critical talent has been wasted in pursuit of theory, much of which has been totally irrelevant to literature in India. The value attached to it was only a 'reflected value', for literary theory was esteemed for its 'cultural significance' more than its usefulness. In terms of the psychology of colonialism, to theorize is the special prerogative of the colonizers and to mime the effort is the strange fate of the colonized. To theorize is to structure the universe of literature, to establish a desirable order, to discipline history, to play the dominating male, the father figure. Colonial success and imperialistic fortunes created a special role for theoretical criticism in the West. The colonial Indian critic, in the inevitable attempt to play his role of a cultural 'female', child, a person deprived of his history, a 'civilized', 'disciplined' being, tried to ape the Western trend of literary theorizing. His need to do so was an imposed need, a transaction guided by the laws of 'reflected value'.

The most crucial factor in this transaction was the attempt to define the 'self' of Indian criticism in terms of 'the other' of Western criticism. This was not just a simple comparative enterprise caused by the shrinking of the globe. In fact, the possibility of a meaningful comparison of Western literary texts/trends and Indian literary

texts/trends has been seriously questioned in recent years.⁸ The constant reference to ‘the other’ was the central feature in the self-definition of Indian criticism. Here are some instances, all belonging to the twentieth century: The opening sentence of G. S. Amur’s highly scholarly essay on laughter in Sanskrit poetics, “Meredith’s theory that the East has no sense of the comic comparable to that of the West does not do justice to Sanskrit literature and literary theory ...”⁹ Krishna Rayan writing to *Rasa* and objective correlative quotes from T. L. Eliot’s essay on *Hamlet*, and remarks: “This could be Ānandavardhana in the ninth century judging a play or a poem in terms of *rasadhvani*.”¹⁰ V. K. Gokak’s ‘Indian Perspective’ on poetry begins thus: “Carlyle defined poetry as musical thought ...”¹¹ B. S. Mardhekar’s opening remarks in his essay discussing the nature of aesthetic judgement:

There is a mass of literature which, either directly or indirectly, bears on our problem. On the philosophical side, we may start with Plato and come, if we care, right down to Prof. Collingwood, with Kant and Croce obviously outstanding in their contributions. On the psychological side, experimental work, which began with Fechner in the last century, has been carried on by a succession of psychologists, including Legowski, Yokoyama, von Allesch, Weber, Buhler, Wertheimer and others.¹²

The insistence of referring to Western scholars, on defining self-identity in terms of the Western other, on reading the universe of aesthetic experience through the mediation of the prescribed text of Western developments in that field of knowledge—all are characteristic of the colonial impact.

The Indian process of self-definition had its counterpart in the Western definition of Indian identity. Indology, the discourse which offered this definition in the field of literature, was not an isolated development, it was an integral part of a global programme of literary ordering congenial to Western imperialism. In this global order, a hierarchic structure of literary categories was postulated with Europe at the top, followed by the White Colonies, the Orient, and Africa, in that order. Different methods of literary study were reserved for each category. Thus, the method appropriate to the study of European literature was comparative literature and literary theory, the one for the Orient was Orientalism or Indology, and that

for African literature was Anthropology. We have already referred to William Jones's project of Indological study. Here I will add comments by a scholar of anthropology about the evolution of his discipline. In a provocative essay, 'Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet', William S. Willis comments:

White rule with its color inequality is the context in which anthropology originated and flourished, and this context has shaped the development of anthropology. The formalization of anthropology in the nineteenth century coincided with the shift from 'booty' colonialism to imperialism, which stressed profit from the control, exploitation, and preservation of cheap colored workers and consumers. The persistent distinction between "primitive" and "civilized" has been made falsely to coincide with the pervasive color bar. This distinction has ignored colored individuals and societies that satisfy the criteria of civilization; on the other hand, this distinction has ignored white individuals and societies not meeting these criteria ... To a considerable extent, anthropology has been the social science that studies dominated colored peoples—and their ancestors—living outside the boundaries of modern white societies.¹³

As anthropology was the method of literary study, and cultural investigation of peoples condemned to a permanent state of primitiveness, so was Indology a method of cultural study of a nation that was condemned to a perpetual decline and linguistic vulgarization. Since the premise of cultural decline was firmly ingrained in Indology, the European scholars engaged in it valued Sanskrit poetics but did not consider the *bhāṣās* fit to evolve literary theories. Indology was received hospitably by Indian scholars; and once again poetics that had lost its usefulness four or five centuries ago was lent 'value'. Coomaraswamy, Hirianna and such other Indian critics who wrote about Sanskrit poetics with great enthusiasm and reverence collaborated with the Indological value scheme in literary criticism. Implicit in Indology's theme of decline was the unwillingness of the West to recognize Indian society's full and present identity. The rise of Indology was concomitant with the rise in Europe of an acute awareness of history as the past. Indology, therefore, could not perceive Indian culture as a dynamic force.

The leaders of the Indian Renaissance tried to counter the Indological unwillingness to permit Indian culture a complete status; but their way to do so was to emphasize the presence of all European virtues in Indian society and culture. The essays on ‘*pratibhā*’ and imagination’, ‘*rasa* and objective correlative’, ‘Aristotle and Bharata’, that one finds in a large number in Indian critical literature of this century are a fall-out of the Renaissance reaction to Indology. Thus, the attempt at self-definition and establishing a native identity in the field of literary criticism involved either catching up with the West or vying with it in claims to ultimate answers to problems in the literary criticism.

The process of ‘Westernization’—in the sense of opening up to the West for the purpose of self-definition—in literary criticism was by no means a single and unified process. It had numerous stands and themes in it. It was quickened by a variety of agents.; The Christian missionaries brought with them printing technology, lexical traditions of their scriptures, European medicines, elementary schools that gave education through the medium of the *bhāṣās*, and coercive conversions. Their appeal was mainly to the lower castes and to the poorer sections of Hindu society. The Indologists carried out historical researches, studied linguistic connections, produced translations of Sanskrit texts and wrote commentaries on them. They interested the class of pundits and mullahs that was away from the centres of power. It was Indology that floated the myth of spirituality as the essence of Indian culture. The colonial administration influenced the land division and revenue structures, introduced ‘Western’-type university education, and introduced the ‘English’ component in education. Mostly it was the middle class brahmin population that was affected directly by Western literary influences released through the administrative channel. Nationalism was a response to the work of the Indologists, the missionaries and the British administration. This collective response, because of the nature of its genesis, freely combined liberal values, orthodoxy and cultural chauvinism. Hence, nationalism in the field of literary criticism involved acceptance of liberal Western ideas and paradigms of literature, together with the revival of Sanskrit poetics. An ideal imitation of the West in this field would have been to orient Indian criticism to the *bhāṣā* literatures just as English criticism was oriented to English literature. But colonialism produced tolerance for inappropriate models, a liking for theorizing, and a loss of self-

confidence. In the field of literary criticism, Westernization has taken the form of submission to the forces of colonization. Hence, the modern period of Indian culture has transformed the bilateral relationship for the *mārga* and the *deśī* traditions into a tripartite relationship between the *mārga*, and the colonial, with respect to literary criticism.

It is generally believed by historians of modern Indian literature that 'Westernization/modernization' marks a radical breaking away from 'tradition' in Indian criticism. Our discussion of the fate of the Western type of contract-based law, in the previous chapter, would indicate that Indian critics can manipulate both to their convenience. Sociological studies of modern Indian society too point to a smaller conclusion. A recent sociological study of 'modernization' in India states:

The indigenous centres and networks of the Little and Great Indian traditions function sometimes independently and sometimes also as bearers of the Little and Great traditions of modernization. In the contemporary processes of cultural change in India both syncretic and separate existence of tradition and modernity, which often seems enigmatic to many, can be explained by these processes. Culturally, therefore, we may find in India three important ramifications: the traditional, the modern, and the traditional-modern.¹⁴

The traditional-modern aspect of culture is what another sociologist, Fred Riggs, describes as 'prismatic',¹⁵ or what we have called in the previous section 'transitional'. It is true that colonialism brought with it Westernization in literature and colonial tendencies in literary criticism. But it is not correct to maintain that it replaced the earlier process of incomplete transition. What it did was merely to introduce one more, and very powerful, element in the value-relationship that had earlier conditioned the *bhāṣā* criticism. Rather than bringing in an altogether new discourse, it actually brought with it a new, and an even more formidable, hindrance to literary criticism's completing the hermeneutical circle. For the last hundred and thirty years the body of Indian literary criticism has been trying to accommodate this third element, and has, thereby, become an expression of a tripartite relation of the *mārga*, the *deśī* and the colonial. The relation consists of various patterns of collaboration

as well as confrontation of these three traditions with one another. The colonial experience has also created an ideology of literary criticism which specifies that criticism should be and should not be. It has affected the Indian perception of the significance of literary criticism, and also provided criticism with an economic basis.

We have referred to Eagleton's account of the rise of 'English' as an academic discipline in England. There its aim was to keep the lower economic classes in their position. That certainly was the aim in India too, in the context of the colonizers-colonized relationship; but in the exclusively Indian context, English education and knowledge of English literature meant higher positions in the government. Acquisition of some knowledge about English literature was also acquisition of the means to social climbing. The modern Indian universities, which are at present the centres for reception and emulation of Western trends in literary criticism, are also centres of seeking material betterment. It is the class of people who benefited by the study of Western forms of knowledge, that controls the education system, publishing industry and the administrative hierarchies of knowledge. Naturally, therefore, Westernization in literary criticism is a matter of vested interest for this class.

The fear of an endless crisis in the field of literary criticism felt by the twentieth century Indian critics is the consequence of the class-based and 'Westernized' perception of the functions of criticism. While the field remains fragmented by the tripartite relation, an ever increasing emphasis is given to a steady Westernization of criticism. As we have argued, Westernization of Indian intellectual tools has merely perpetuated colonization instead of initiating modernization. The only means at our disposal to modernize literary criticism is, in fact, to allow it to complete the transition which had remained incomplete during the pre-British centuries of the *bhāṣā* literatures, and which had become all the more difficult to complete during the colonial period. It is a delusion to believe that Westernization of literary criticism in India has given it a new vitality. On the contrary, by inducing Indian critics to undertake an imitative activity of mindless theorizing, it has created a set of literary premises and critical frameworks into which *bhāṣā* literature is coercively being fitted. The colonial perceptions of the history of the *bhāṣā* literatures, and the subsequent cultural amnesia, have made modern Indian critics incapable of appreciating the pragmatic wisdom of the *bhāṣā* literatures in refusing to submit to the authority of the *mārga*

criticism. We will try to read the structure of this amnesia in the text of some selected literary theories produced by some of the most outstanding Indian critics of the present century.

Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy are the three most influential literary critics of the Indian Renaissance. All three had profound knowledge of literary and cultural traditions of the East as well as the West, fluency in several languages, and a self-conscious nationalistic spirit. Coomaraswamy and Sri Aurobindo had been educated in the best British universities. Tagore and Coomaraswamy had an understanding of fine arts other than literature too; and Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were poets of great stature. All three engaged themselves in pursuit of theory. Tagore's literary theory, mostly of a comparative nature, was presented through lectures and essays. Coomaraswamy turned to Sanskrit poetics and spoke in terms of a perennial philosophy of art and literature. In comparison, Sri Aurobindo was more consistent and original, for he tried to present a systematic theory of futuristic poetry. We will analyze some of Sri Aurobindo's critical ideas here as representative ideas of the Indian Renaissance.¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) received his entire education after the age of seven in England, where he studied with absorbing interest European classical languages and literature. Matthew Arnold and Oscar Wilde were the literary heroes, and the theme of 'the civilizing influence of literary study' was dominant, in the years that Sri Aurobindo spent at Cambridge. He was, therefore, totally estranged from Indian culture and the Indian literary heritage when he returned in 1891. Initially he attempted to fashion his poetry and poetics after the English or European models. One can see that the aesthetic notions scattered through his early writings are lifted straight from Plato and Shelley. But, after his return home, Sri Aurobindo seems to have become self-conscious about the colonial influence. Soon after he settled down to a teaching career at Baroda, he acquainted himself with Indian metaphysics, began writing poems based on Indian myths, took part in nationalist politics, started thinking about Indian art, literature and languages in a serious way, and tried to reassess his own literary values. In an early essay, 'The Source of Poetry',¹⁷ written when he was barely thirty, we see Sri Aurobindo arming himself to reject the European idea of the poet as creator. With the traditional Indian concept of the poet as a seer at the back of his mind, he asserts in this essay that poetry is a revelation

of something that exists eternally. It is here that he introduces the Sanskrit terms *Sātvik*, *Tāmasik* and *Rājasik* to describe various levels of poetic inspiration. The essay shows the nationalistic tendency of reviving the Indian past as well as the colonial compulsion to theorize. This essay should form an interesting first document¹⁸ of the amnesiac modern Indian criticism which shows how concepts prompted by *bhakti* poetry had to confront simultaneously the revivalistic spirit and the colonial influence.

The essay proposes a skeletal conceptual framework to understand the nature and kinds of poetry. According to it, poetry is essentially revelation, which, passing through the consciousness of the poet in the form of inspiration, manifests itself as an individual poem. The implication is that poetry must strive towards the condition of revelation in order to be perfect. The essay suggests that revelation is attained by overcoming the poet's personal preferences and by minimizing the role of his personality. Perfect poetry makes evident the intuitive reason, the intuitive judgement and the intuitive intellect of the poet. These are the higher functions of the poet's mind. There are also some lower functions—the realizing mind, and the observing and reasoning intellect with its aids, fancy and memory.

The intuitive intellect receives poetry/revelation, the intuitive reason and the intuitive judgement mould the revelation. Revelation—Inspiration—Manifestation is a continuous process. Revelation belongs to that part of the consciousness which is in touch with an undivided, unstructured reality beyond appearances, and beyond the grasp of the intellect and emotions. When, from this flux, revelation enters the poet's consciousness and language, it comes under the operation of reason and judgement. These mental faculties restructure it. Sri Aurobindo classifies poetry into three types—*tāmasik*, *rājasik* and *sātvik*—in terms of the interaction between the revelation and the conscious mind. What makes poetry great is the indissoluble link of the mind's response to the flux of reality. This intense and integrated response of the poet's mind can be termed as the quality of saintliness, for it silences personality and has the quality of prophecy. All great poetry is inevitably saintly in character.

The instances used by Sri Aurobindo to illustrate the kinds of poetry in this essay are mostly from English poetry. The terminology employed is from the *sāṃkhya* epistemology. The poetic virtue outlined, however, immediately brings to mind the long line of

eminent poets of the *bhāṣā* traditions. In another essay, written in 1907, Sri Aurobindo introduces a different set of Sanskrit terms: *rasa*, *bhoga*, *ānanda* to describe the nature of poetic delight. The nationalistic essay is characteristically called *The National Value of Art*.¹⁹ It is an attempt to describe the aesthetic principles at the centre of Indian civilization, an interest that Aurobindo shared with Coomaraswamy. In a famous letter written to his Anglicized brother, Mono Mohan Ghose,²⁰ Sri Aurobindo attempts a passionate defence of Indian art and art values, and suggests that if one had the right sympathy Indian literature would no longer appear a volley of grotesque and crude folktales but would seem full of a spirit of harmony and delight. Here he was clearly reacting to the Indological conception of Indian literature. His need to 'Indianize' himself and to decolonize his critical idiom are fully evident in his early critical comments. However, a close study of his early aesthetics shows that he found it difficult to free himself from his English upbringing and the aesthetic ideas he had inherited from the English critics. In essence, his was a colonial critical consciousness.

The Future Poetry, a collection of essays serialized in the *Arya* from 1917 to 1920,²¹ is a survey of English poetry conducted with a view to showing how most of English poetry falls short of the ideal of poetry as 'the *mantra* of the Real'. The criteria that Sri Aurobindo employs to assess the achievements of English poetry are 'revelation of spiritual reality', 'intuitive intellect' and 'intuitive vision'. His indictment of English poetry, which he finds generally lacking in spirituality, implies an unstated comparison between the English poetic tradition and the Indian poetry of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*. The attempt is to turn the hierarchy established by Indology upside down; however, the hierarchic framework is retained. Within that framework, *The Future Poetry* chalks out the principles that would bring future poetry in English in line with ancient Indian poetry. These principles mattered to Sri Aurobindo because he himself was engaged in an experiment of Indianizing the tradition of English Romantic poetry. This attempt at synthesis is the focal point in Sri Aurobindo's literary aesthetics presented in *The Future Poetry*. At the beginning of his argument he poses a basic question about the nature of poetry:

In order to get a firm clue which we can follow fruitfully in the retrospect and prospect we have proposed to ourselves it will

not be amiss to enquire what is the highest power we demand from poetry; or let us put it more largely and get nearer the root of the matter—what may be the nature of poetry, its essential law, and how out of that arises the possibility of its use at the *mantra* of the Real.²²

The theory of poetry that Sri Aurobindo proposes in response to this question can be succinctly stated as follows: Poetry expresses the soul of man and embodies in the word whatever power of beauty the poet ‘sees’, when the creation is ‘ideal’ and suffused with the spiritual insight into the poet’s Self and Nature. Poetry achieves greatness when it effectively combines the highest intensity of rhythmical movement, with the highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance and the highest intensity of the soul’s vision of truth. Poetry endowed with these three intensities voices a supreme harmony of five eternal powers: Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit, the five ‘Suns of Poetry’.

The emphasis on the visionary quality in poetry indicates Sri Aurobindo’s preference for traditional Indian poetry of the *mārga* tradition. But it is guided by his High Romantic inheritance. In order to highlight the spiritual aspect of poetry, Sri Aurobindo tends to twist Sanskrit poetic terms. The most interesting example of this tendency is his use of the term *rasa*, which he employs in its original, Vedic, sense to mean ‘a liquid’, ‘a divine food’, ‘a moving entity’ and ‘the sap of a plant’. He uses it to explain the nature of the creative process rather than the experience of the art by the audience. Thus, the term is pressed into use for forming his artist-oriented, expressive, theory of poetry. Another instance is that of the description of *ānanda*. Sanskrit poetics had used the concept of *brahmananda* in an analogous manner, as a metaphor to explain the aesthetic experience. Sri Aurobindo takes the metaphor too seriously and equates *brahmananda* with *kāvyaānanda* in a literal way. This confusion between poetic delight and spiritual delight that he makes is an instance of nationalism joining hands with Indology—while one sought some good in the Indian past, the other claimed that the good in the past was restricted to the spiritual. But this confusion can also be found in the aesthetics of the High Romantics like Keats, Blake and Shelley, who saw poetry as a resolution of Truth, Good, Beauty. In fact, though Sri Aurobindo reverses the colonial hierarchy of cultures, the whole structure of his *Future*

Poetry is designed after Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. The primary sections of both concentrate on defining poetry by distinguishing it from science, philosophy and logic. The middle sections of both are devoted to a tendentious survey of poetry—European poetry in the case of Shelley, and English poetry in the case of Aurobindo—and the concluding sections of both essays harp on the possibilities that poetry can explore under ideal circumstances. It is possible that as a personal preference Sri Aurobindo found the High Romantic aesthetics perfectly in keeping with ancient Indian poetry and poetics, and perhaps he thought that the two could be accommodated in one common system of poetics that his *Future Poetry* was to found. This attempt at synthesis was also an exercise in cultural self-definition. The motivating force behind the work was a passionate nationalism. Sri Aurobindo had an exceptionally good command over the Sanskrit language; and, even if he had not read Sanskrit poetics—there is no evidence in his writing to prove the contrary—he had a firsthand knowledge of Sanskrit literature, he knew several Indian languages and had acquaintance with the *bhāṣā* literatures. And yet, when he came to think of developing a new system of literary criticism, he found himself cut off from the Indian literary situation and the historical changes in the critical tradition. In his poems like *Ahana*,²³ he has celebrated *bhakti*; how is it then that in his criticism no trace of a *bhāṣā* awareness is to be seen? The answer to this question can be had by considering Sri Aurobindo as a 'colonial' critic, an enterprising intellectual belonging to a demoralized, amnesiac society desperately trying to revive a culture almost gone to seed. His failure was inherent in the attempt to synthesize, in creating a pattern of collaboration where a confrontation would have been fruitful, in accepting a framework of nationalism that was in essence colonial, and in becoming theoretical where the need was to be historical.

Sri Aurobindo belonged to the generation of Indian Romantics, whose assumptions about literature we tend to reject from our 'superior', 'modernistic' point of view. It is instructive to see what happened to literary criticism in India after modernism reached the Indian shores. 'Modernism', which in Europe was a product of a genuine social upheaval and cultural breakdown, reached India through literary models rather than through economic developments and social crisis. The first phase of modernism in Europe had been initiated by the revolutions of 1848; the second,

more self-conscious phase had begun around the first world war. Indian 'modernism' made its beginning in the 1930s; this period saw several developments in different directions. The doctrine-bound left-wing writing called the 'Progressive Movement'; nationalistic writings which combined fantasy and history; Gandhian literature which had a stylized idealism at the centre; formalistic writing that praised style for its own sake; poetry that employed various techniques like surrealism, symbolism, imagism; and fiction that employed techniques of cinema narrative as well as those of the avant-garde European fiction—all these were vying for a place in mainstream Indian literature. In a sense, Indian 'modernism' was more cleverly imitative of the Western models than Indian Romanticism was. In criticism, therefore, modernism brought with it the trend of pseudo-theorizing, for most of it was theory based on alien theories without any relevance to Indian traditions.

Bal Sitaram Mardhekar (1909–1956), Marāṭhī's first 'modernist', is one of the most significant critics of the modernistic period. He wrote his critical works both in Marāṭhī and in English. His first critical book, *Arts and Man*, was published in England in 1938. It was followed by a book in Marāṭhī, *Vāṅmayin Mahātmā*, and one in English, *Two Lectures on an Aesthetics of Literature*, in 1944. After his return from England, Mardhekar wrote and lectured on literary aesthetics extensively. All his critical writings in English were brought under one title, *Arts and Man*, published posthumously in 1960, and those in Marāṭhī published as *Soundarya āni Sāhitya* in 1956.²⁴

The problem central to Mardhekar's literary aesthetics is that of the perception of beauty which connected an objectively existing work of art to a subjectively realized value judgement. He finds his inspiration in Clive Bell's theory of significance, of significant form, and in Russell's logical method of philosophic enquiry. Mardhekar tried to be original by attempting to bring the two together. Since his aim was to construct a comprehensive general theory of aesthetics, he took up such fundamental issues as the nature of aesthetic judgement, aesthetic emotion, and aesthetic organization. The central tenet of his theory is that aesthetic experience is a matter of direct, unmediated knowledge perceived through a series of absolute, qualitative sensations, and that beauty—which in all its manifestations is a rhythmic pattern of harmony—contrast—balance—is independent of its perceiver. Aesthetic judgement is

an outcome of the aesthetic emotion evoked in the mind of the perceiver by the rhythmic form; and unless it so results from a direct experience, it is no aesthetic judgement. Mardhekar illustrates this aspect of his theory by examining the premise, “The Ajanta frescoes are beautiful.” The text of this premise by itself would not form an aesthetic judgement unless the context provides that it is based on an individual’s firsthand experience. The moment it is expressed by another, Mardhekar tells us, it ceases to be an aesthetic judgement. The cumulative rhythm of harmony–contrast–balance is what an artist creates through his specific medium.

Deriving a corollary from his central theory, Mardhekar makes a distinction between ‘medium’ and ‘means’ of art. In his opinion, the two are fundamentally different. In painting, pigments are the ‘means’, whereas colours are the ‘medium’. Similarly, in poetry, sound is the means of organization and the meaning is the medium. Taking up I. A. Richard’s distinction between the cognitive meaning and the emotive meaning, Mardhekar further subdivides the emotive meaning into ‘aesthetic’ and ‘poetic’, the aesthetic meaning being absolutely emotive, and the poetic meaning only contingently emotive. Under this classification poetry, by virtue of its use of contingently emotive meanings, gets relegated to a lower position in Mardhekar’s hierarchy of the fine arts.

Mardhekar’s theory has been continuously discussed, disputed, and readjusted by Marāṭhī critics since its first publication.²⁵ In fact, it has become almost the central critical document of the Marāṭhī modernist tradition. It is possible to argue, as has been done by Marāṭhī critics a number of times during the last forty years, that Mardhekar’s theory is logically, philosophically or metaphysically inadequate. It is also possible, on the other hand, to prove that he was a highly original critic who thought about fundamental issues related to art and literature. What concerns us here is not the consistency of argument or its logical uniformity in Mardhekar’s theory, but the logic of its existence. Had he considered his own assertion that aesthetic judgement is an unmediated experience more carefully, he would have realized the futility of two types of mediation—of theory, and of alien intellectual traditions and concepts. In the light of his theory, both these become redundant. His range of Western reference is impressive: Clive Bell, Collingwood, Russell, Aristotle, Kant, Croce, Freud, Eliot, Coleridge, Abercrombie, T. E. Hulme, Bosanquet, Herbert Read.

Confronted with the Ajanta frescoes, any one of these would have pleaded his inability to pass an aesthetic judgement, for Ajanta art has its source in aesthetic assumptions and art philosophy of a type radically different from that which Western criticism is equipped to deal with. Yet Mardhekar proceeded to build a theory in the naïve belief that art theories are universal in import and utility, and that intellectual formations of Europe can be safely put to use in defining the sense of beauty in India. Mardhekar's theory does not refer to any part of Sanskrit poetics. But the faith in the universality of theory implies, in fact, an attempt to synthesize.

Mardhekar was the first important poet in Marāṭhī to introduce a post-Romantic vitality, an awareness of language, diction and metres that the Romantic period had blunted. His poetic idiom was Marāṭhī, and it had the context of a living native tradition. He wrote on modern themes, but the awareness in his poetry was inherited from the *bhakti* school. The poetry of Mardhekar, therefore, was suffused with the spirit of rebellion. This spirit of rebellion was the essence of *bhakti* poetry. However erudite and well-constructed, Mardhekar's criticism lacked the context of the tradition and the spirit of revolt. Even when he tried to point out errors in Aristotle's philosophy of poetry, Mardhekar had no plans of moving out of the Western canon of criticism. It can be said that in Mardhekar's literary criticism, as in Sri Aurobindo the *bhāṣā* tradition of revolt against orthodoxy and authority was consumed and stilted by the colonial trend of theorizing. Sri Aurobindo tried to move away from the colonial paradigms and into the world of ancient Indian poetry. Mardhekar threw the *mārga* traditions overboard, and wedded himself intellectually to the colonial tradition. The motivating force in both was the urge to create something new, to nativize and to vitalize. The urge was inherited from the *bhāṣā* traditions. Sri Aurobindo and B. S. Mardhekar are two prototypical modern Indian critics. To the extent that they represent the field, it can be said that literary criticism in India displays patterns of the tripartite relation of the *bhāṣā*, the *mārga*, and the colonial traditions, and that, conditioned by a cultural amnesia, it still remains a fragmented discourse.

Nativism

Nativism, a recent critical trend in Marāṭhī, is an attempt to free Marāṭhī literary sensibility and criticism from the prison of the tripartite relation described above. It views literatures as an

activity taking place ‘within’ a specific language, such as Marāṭhī or Gujarātī, and bound by the rules of discourse native to the language of its origin. It understands writing as a social act, and expects of it an ethical sense of commitment to the society within which it is born. It rules out the colonial standard of literary history as a series of epochs, and the *mārga* claim of the mainstream literature as being the only authentic literature. Nativism is a language-specific way of looking at literature. It rejects the concept-specific method of ‘universal’ criticism. As such, it gathers its main critical issues and themes from within the tradition of the literature it examines, instead of approaching it with preconceived notions of good and bad literature. At the same time, it refuses to glorify history and tradition, and values realism. The principal advocate of Nativism in Marāṭhī is Bhalchandra Nemade. However, there are several other trends in Marāṭhī, such as the literature of regional sensibility, caste sensibility and dialect sensibility, that converge onto Nativism proper.

Bhalchandra Nemade (b. 1938) shot into fame with his first novel, *Kosala* (1963), which set a new stylistic trend and a level of realism in Marāṭhī fiction. His other novels—*Biḍhār*, *Jarilā* and *Jhul*—have received much appreciation. He has written consistently on issues related to literary culture, style and language, translation and influence. He has also worked on the problem of the influence of English on Marāṭhī prose style. Combining his knowledge of the English influence and his knowledge of Marāṭhī prose style, he produced an extended essay on the Marāṭhī novel in 1980. This has come to be regarded as a critical document of seminal importance in Marāṭhī. It was published in an English translation in 1986.²⁶ At the very beginning, Nemade offers a tentative description of his variety of Nativism:

The present generation must have an unfailing nativistic awareness that the novel in Marāṭhī is a creation of Marāṭhī writers, who, in turn, are product of the Marāṭhī society. Further, the Formalistic, unintelligent practice of picking up all and sundry works of art from language all over the world for a comparative assessment of artifacts in Marāṭhī—a tendency rife in our criticism—has to be avoided. It is dangerous for criticism to enter the comparative field without making a deep study of both cultures compared. Culture is not a hot-

house, but a soil-bound process; literature is not a theoretical construct but a living phenomenon.²⁷

With this awareness of literature as a phenomenon ‘born within its own language’, Nativism avoids seeking self-definition by referring to the ‘Western other’.

Nemade’s essay presents an account of the novel in Marāṭhī. In order to describe the various tendencies manifest in the Marāṭhī novel, he devises three critical categories, all of purely descriptive nature: ‘*rīti*, ‘*kṛiti*’ and ‘*pratikṛiti*’. *Rīti* is used to denote design-consciousness, and a formalistic, affected style; *kṛiti* is employed to mean action on the part of the novelist; and *prakṛiti* is used to indicate illusion or image. Nemade avoids the colonial compulsion to theorize about these terms. Using them descriptively, he finds apt illustrations in works of fiction in Marāṭhī. Thus, he traces three dominant tendencies in the nineteenth century Mārāṭhī novel: *Muktāmāla* (1861) by Laxmanśāstri Moreśwarśāstri Haḷbe, which is the first *rīti*-oriented novel, typifies the *Muktāmāla* trend; *Yamunāparyāṭan* (1861) by Bābā Padmanji, which is a *kṛiti*-oriented novel (and also the first novel in Marāṭhī), typifies the *Yamunāparyāṭan* trend; and *Mochangaḍ* (1871) by R. B. Gunjekar, which is a *pratikṛiti*-oriented novel, typifies the *Mochangaḍ* trend. Nemade sees these three trends in the Marāṭhī novel. *Yamunāparyāṭan* expresses, in his opinion, the basic drive of the Marāṭhī society. It shows a strong inclination towards realism and a social morality. On the other hand, *Muktāmāla* express the colonial domination in style and theme, and *Mochangaḍ* shows a penchant for eroticism and fantasy that are characteristic of the punditic *mārga* tradition. Thus, Nemade’s classification of the Marāṭhī novel displays a clear awareness of the tripartite relation which constitutes the modern Indian literary discourse. His preference, naturally, is for the novel of social realism and *kṛiti*. He describes the history of the Marāṭhī novel in terms of a composite interaction among the three basic trends, and on the basis of this historiography draws a chart of Marāṭhī novels after 1950. The chart is presented here (see p. 122) in a tabular form in which Nemade originally presents it.

The essay presents an incisive analysis of numerous Marāṭhī novels that serve to illustrate Nemade’s classification. But what he values most in Marāṭhī fiction is the nativistic awareness that the novel is a social, linguistic and artistic activity and, therefore, it has

a moral responsibility towards the Marāṭhī society. Commenting on the Nativistic ethical novel, he writes:

The new novel, which originates in *Yamunāparyāṭan*, has an intimate relation with reality. It considers *kriti* to be an indivisible aspect of creation, and presents a new value scale about man in life. As such it distinguishes itself from the other trends by virtue of its new morality. It believes in selecting its subject matter from contemporary life and world, and in providing a thematic dimension to its style.²⁸

Nemade's essay has provided a new direction to criticism of the novel in Marāṭhī. It has created a general awareness that criticism is not a universal game of concepts and tools, but a serious investigation of native literary traditions.

The Novel Spectrum

Unrealistic

<i>Pratikriti</i> -oriented Mochangaḍ trend	1	Historical
	2	Mythological
	3	Biographical
	4	Fantasy
<i>Rīti</i> -oriented Muktāmāla trend	5	Sexual
Regional	6	Regional
	7	Sub-community subculture based
<i>Kriti</i> -oriented Yamunāparyāṭm trend	8	Problem based
	9	New morality

Realistic

What Nemade's essay offers is not a systematic theory of fiction; it suggests a new style of critical thought. However, it is doubtful whether literary criticism in Marāṭhī will fully assimilate this new style of thinking. Already, it is being seen as a new 'theory' of fiction, and there have been attempts to present 'theoretical' statements about Nativism. It is also seen by some commentators as a new

statement of nationalistic revival.²⁹ Nemade himself is aware that criticism is not valuable in itself but acquires value to the extent it contributes to the development of the literary culture. In the conclusion to his essay he reminds the reader that literary criticism in Marāṭhī will have to devote itself to thinking about literature produced in Marāṭhī:

... it has become necessary for Marāṭhī criticism to devote itself to creating an atmosphere congenial to creative literature. Or else such surveys as the present one do not reach even a good bibliography ... Our cultural responsibility is not fully discharged in merely discussing what has grown; to sow properly, to tend it and to destroy the pestilence of destructive tendencies are activities of greater cultural value. They are more deserving topics for discussion. There is little possibility of the situation changing for the better unless the next generation revolutionizes criticism and cures Marāṭhī of its present poverty of taste.³⁰

Nemade's essay is an excellent, though solitary, example of Nativism in literary criticism. It has opened the possibility of rooting criticism in the *bhāṣā* tradition. It shows a way out of the tripartite relation that has kept Indian literary criticism fragmented and abstract. It is too early to say if Nativism will become the central force in Marāṭhī criticism and end the transition that began with Rājaśekhara a thousand years ago. But it is certain that literary criticism will benefit immensely if it cultivates a nativistic awareness of Indian literary tradition.

India is a vast country with numerous linguistic cultures. These linguistic cultures have their individual ways of viewing literary creativity. The functions that literature performs in India are not necessarily what the European sociology of literature stipulates. The range of literary transactions in India is wide. These transactions cannot be classified in the accepted Western typology of the mainstream, the popular and the folk. A study of the *bhāṣā* literatures may show that literature in the Indian languages has been a matter of revolt and heresy rather than that of imposition and authority. In the minimum, Indian literature has ingrained in it a spirit of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Critical models, tools, standards evolved in Europe in small, monolingual and

(comparatively) monocultural nations during the period of colonial expansion for the purpose of 'civilizing' the 'primitive' nations have, therefore, limited utility in the *bhāṣā* context.

Criticism is not an isolated and autonomous activity. It needs support and sustenance from larger assumptions about life, language, meaning and society. A visible critical theory or statement always stands above a vast invisible structure of a society's 'metaphysics' which, in turn, is conditioned by its specific geography, history and linguistic range. In order to be meaningful, criticism has, of necessity, to share the same basic assumption with its target literature. Literature growing out of one type of underlying linguistic and metaphysical structure cannot be understood and studied by criticism growing out of another and alien type of underlying linguistic and metaphysical structure. At present, the situation in Indian criticism is very similar to the one described in the epigraph to this essay: three different *ragas* are being 'sung' by our critics—the *mārga*, the *deśī* and the colonial. To add to this undesirable fragmentation in the field of criticism, the colonial period has introduced an amnesia in Indian criticism, which has distorted its memory of the *bhāṣā* literary traditions. Owing to the amnesia, the loss of self-confidence, the anxiety to postulate new theories and the fragmentation of criticism, the Indian critic is gripped with a fear of a crisis in criticism. In fact, that fear itself is the true crisis. Indian criticism will have to come out of it; and that is possible only through a nativistic self-awareness. A recovery of the memory of native literary traditions will reduce the anxiety about the absence of theory. What Indian literatures need at present is a realistic historiography and not so much of a theoretical discussion. If this essay has succeeded in making the point that cultural amnesia is the central problem of Indian criticism, then it also implies that what should come after amnesia is nativistic history.

Epilogue

Function of Criticism

Re-reading this essay a year and a half after I completed writing the previous section, I find it necessary to add one more brief section to it. I have chosen the title 'Function of Criticism' for it. The rich body of Western criticism is replete with essays with this or similar titles. My aim here is not to take issue with any of those. The aim is to make an honest statement of what I perceive to be the role of criticism in the context of India's contemporary literary culture.

There is no fixed correspondence between the cultural well-being of societies and the literary criticism that they produce. No culture will perish for want of texts of literary criticism, nor will a society show nobler human qualities if it also happens to produce important critical documents. The equation between progressive cultures and progressive literary criticism is not logically valid. The fact that such an equation does enjoy a wide popularity in post-colonial societies needs to be explained with reference to their political history, the history of domination by European societies that used literary criticism as a means of cultural propaganda.

There is also no fixed correspondence between the well-being of creative literature and literary criticism. Linguistic creativity is an inevitable consequence of language being a human skill. Human communities will continue to mould language creatively so long as they use language as a means of communication. Literature was produced in times when literary criticism had still not acquired the status it enjoys today. The history of any given literature tells us that a sudden growth in critical activity does not necessarily bring about a corresponding growth in creative literature. The correlation between creative literature and critical writings, and theories of their interdependence, are not, therefore, logically valid. That

such theories do exist and enjoy prestige has to be explained with reference to the history of the politics of literature.

The history of Indian literature is highly instructive in this regard. It shows that very fine criticism could be produced, as it was in Sanskrit from the eleventh century onwards, without having a corresponding body of living literature. It also shows that very great literature could be produced, as was the literature of devotion, without having a corresponding body of active criticism. This lesson of history is well worth remembering while thinking about the function of criticism.

Literature is a kind of knowledge, the knowledge about human existence with reference to the cosmos, nature, society, and the inner mental processes of human beings. Besides, it is presented in a manner that is aesthetically remarkable. But literature also tends to become 'power', because it is a form of knowledge. It becomes power when it is treated as 'magic', as in primitive societies, or as a class possession, as in stratified societies. The need to transmit from generation to generation, this knowledge that is power generates the need to develop various forms of critical discourse. The main function of criticism is, therefore, to be a useful tool in the process of education. In its most essential form literary criticism is a classroom register of thought which initiates 'childish' readers into the world of powerful and adult *rasikas*. Critical reviews, essays, books and periodicals, scholarly research in the field of literature, high speculation and theorizing about literature, are all post-forms of the classroom register; and they all return to it in order to make it increasingly more sophisticated and powerful. Hence, societies which do not teach literature in and through their formal or informal channels of education do not find it necessary to formulate critical premises. This does not mean that they do not have these premises; but these are not separated from the very act of literary enjoyment. They are not gathered in language and expression either before or after the act of literary enjoyment.

The actual act of literary enjoyment can be compared to the moment of union between lovers or that between God and the seeker, for all these are mods of entering which also admit being entered into. They are acts which rise above the duality of passivity and activity. In societies which value possession of women as if they are material objects, and production of children as means of greater material prosperity, the grammar of love gets impersonally

articulated. *Kāmaśāstra* is an instance of this tendency. The same is true of societies which value the 'discovery' of and communication with God as symbols of social status. Religious dogma and orthodox theology are the temporally subsequent forms of pure spiritual experiences. In societies which value literary art as a means of consolidating class/caste authority, literary criticism comes to acquire importance. The rise of literary criticism is bound by forces that exist before and after the actual moment of the reader's entering literature or literature's entering the reader.

Literary criticism as a system of thought or as a style of thinking can be, and has been, fascinatingly sophisticated. But the test of its validity is its logical and philosophical consistency within the frame of references it uses for its expression. But in this light, literary criticism is a branch of philosophy. There it transcends the division between sense and non-sense. As a branch of philosophy its primary need is to be logical, systematic and to belong within the established parameters of the intellectual discourse defined for it by social conventions. Its ultimate function and aim is to deliver itself to the teacher of literature who can use it as a ready classroom tool for the teaching of literature. And this teaching is in a larger part about the tools themselves. These intellectual tools, and an awareness about them, offer the learner an entry into the select group of adepts that claims a special authority.

If literary criticism is, as argued here, a teaching aid, and if it originates in the teaching procedures adopted by a society, then probably, many of the problems of criticism should really be the problems of literary education. In India they are indeed so. In monolingual and monocultural societies, only one language-literature is taught as a living literature. In England and France, for instance, English and French literature are taught, respectively, as living literatures. All other literatures are taught as 'foreign' or 'ancient' literatures. The result of this one-track literary education is that the style of thinking about literature in these countries is a common style that has a wider acceptance as the dominant critical discourse. All oppositions to it, or tensions within it, emerge with reference to the commanding discourse. Consistent and commonly accepted dominant discourses tend to acquire value and self-confidence over a period of time, and crystallise into 'major' theories. The situation in multilingual and multicultural societies is different.

In India, in any given university, several literatures are taught as living literatures. Several 'foreign' and 'ancient' literatures are also taught without the attendant awareness of their being foreign and dated. Indian teachers of English literature and world literature adhere to the critical norms relevant to English literature and world literature. Those who teach Sanskrit literature adhere to Sanskrit poetics. Teachers of regional literatures have their own set of critical beliefs. But all these teachers, and by extension those reviewers, essayists, scholars and philosophers who ultimately return their knowledge to teaching, constitute the Indian community of 'literary critics'. Naturally, no single critical discourse can claim the dominant place in this community. There are fragmented communications and exchanges, distrust and fear, tension and strife in the intellectual transactions of this community. All these stand in stark contrast to the situation in monolingual and monocultural literary communities. If the Indian community of literary scholars had pledged its singular devotion to one literature, whether Sanskrit, Hindī, English or any *bhāṣā* literature, it would have made some contribution to the theoretical and philosophic contemplation of literature. Alternatively, if Indian universities start teaching a fictitious discipline designated 'Indian Literature', and stop teaching regional literatures separately, perhaps, new theorizing will arise, for, in that case, a commonly shared dominant discourse of criticism will become necessary. But there is no need to despair. The three-language formula, and multilingual literary education, have been conscious decisions of the Indian society. They are in fact a strategy to come to terms with Indian national history. What needs to be fought is not the apparent confusion in literary criticism, but the lack of self-confidence and the cultural amnesia.

The problems faced by Indian intellectuals today are not problems peculiar to India alone. Similar problems are faced by many other post-colonial societies. In a review of the Latin American writer Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire*, Sham Lal writes:

By recreating the past with its midsummer madness, its ravenous greed, sadistic cruelties, pious lies, dark superstitions and gnawing anxieties, Galeano hopes to give back to the people their lost memory.¹

Other Latin American writers have also dealt with the problem of amnesia in their works, the most famous instance of which is Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In it, Marquez depicts the loss of linguistic memory—carried to the ridiculous extent where people have to write down names of all objects in order to remember them—as a Latin American cultural problem associated with the colonial experience. An American thinker, Velikovsky, has made a probing study of cultural amnesia in his book, *Mankind in Amnesia*.² He interprets amnesia, collective amnesia that is, as a result of a sense of guilt about the past. He writes:

A victim of amnesia may live adjacent to neighbours who are completely unaware of his plight. He may be employed, he may be married, he may behave on the surface like anybody else. But he has forgotten everything before a certain date. He does not know his name and he assumes a new name to hide his own perplexity; he does not remember his childhood and adolescence or maturity prior to that date; he does not know the town or city from which he came and how he got to his new habitat; he does not know whether he was married formerly nor whether he has children. If he comes into conflict with the law, as for instance for bigamy, he may wind up in a psychiatric clinic ...³

What would happen if he came in conflict with the law for polygamy? In the Indian critical community, each critic pledges his loyalty to one or the other of the literatures taught in India, while in reality he is 'married' to several literatures. There is no need to compare this situation with that prevailing in the Western countries. In fact, multilingual, multiliteral education is the greatest strength of Indian culture at present. Multiculturalism and multilingualism have been the strength of Indian society from the twelfth century. That multiplicity was seen as degradation in the past, and is seen as weakness today. We need to get over the sense of guilt through an open-eyed approach to history in order to build a modern Indian critical discourse.

The Post-Memory Imagination

'All Changed, Changed Utterly'

It is now a century since the Irish poet, W. B. Yeats responded to the Easter Uprising of 1916 that had led to violence, bloodshed and the death of many young men, with the memorable lines, '... everything changed, changed utterly, a terrible beauty is born'. It was in the summer of 1986, a full seventy years later, that I started jotting down points to prepare an essay that was the very first version of the preceding three chapters. The year 1986 belongs not just to another century but also to a substantially different world. I developed the ideas in those notes the next year at the University of Leeds, in April–May 1987. The essay, which lay among my papers for a year and a half, was still far from finished—it came to a conclusion somewhat unexpectedly.

In the winter of 1988, I found myself locked in a rather unsavoury fight with the then Vice Chancellor of Baroda University. In order to defend my rights, it became necessary for me to take recourse to the judiciary and make rounds of the civil court in Baroda. The premises and the corridors of the court were filled with typists preparing legal documents. Waiting there for hours together and watching them type one page after another, I remembered that I had not used my Olivetti portable type-writer for a while. And so I decided to open it, dust it and, in a manner of speaking, 'Write to myself'. I am not a poet, and there was no chance of my producing any verse. What came out was a short piece that I decided to append to the *Amnesia* essay as an 'Epilogue'. About a year later, in early 1990, I sent the manuscript to the late Professor Sujit Mukherjee, who was associated with the publisher, Orient Longman. He told me that all of that material could be printed as a single book. It appeared in print in the summer of 1992 as *After Amnesia*.

The period of 1986 to 1992 was when things were changing very rapidly in India and elsewhere in the world. When I began

scribbling my notes for the first draft, we did not have a TV set of our own. For me and my wife, the most important source of entertainment was a film or two, or an occasional play every month going to the cinema theatre. For most part of the day, when we were at home, we played the radio. We had a rather kind elderly couple as neighbours. Our school-going daughter used to go to their house to watch the weekly episode of the *Ramayana*, or was it the *Mahabharata*? In 1986–87, the entire India used to gather around the nearest TV set on Sunday mornings to watch the serialised, excessively theatrical and slow moving epics that were taking a new life, in a new form of imagination; and the nation responded to that new imagination with an overwhelming endorsement.

Just as we had no TV set of our own, we did not have a landline telephone of our own either. For making local calls, we normally used the telephones in our office, taking care to not inconvenience our superiors. For receiving long distance calls, we had to use the number of some well-meaning neighbour, who would first receive the call, hang up with a promise to summon the required receiver, and then after a due while, the telephone would ring again. One was always conscious of trying to keep the conversation as short as possible since the meter ran by the minute. For making an out-station call, we had to visit the nearest post-office, book a call and then wait for about an hour to get our turn to speak. Getting your own telephone connection was an ordeal—except in mega-cities like Bombay and Delhi—and the waiting period could be anything from two to five years. This was 1986, when I started scribbling notes for this book. By the time, it was published, everything was changed, ‘changed utterly’ as W. B. Yeats would have said.

By 1992, practically every middle-class house in every small and big town of India, and many lower middle class houses too, had their own TV sets. Not only did they have these sets, but the images could also be seen in multi-colour. The advertisements for TV, on TV, and on large hoardings were getting increasingly seductive and more colourful. These advertisements had started appearing in the magazines too, which too had started to become more techni-coloured. The older monochrome had been replaced by glossy and multi-coloured pages in the weeklies, and their sales had picked up as magazines had never before known. It is not just the TV sets, but refrigerators and air-conditioners too started arriving in every middle-class house. Moreover, one found that most families, in all

the urban centres, had started constructing their own houses or buying them. And, in those houses, landlines, and even wireless telephone machines came with an ease that India had not known before. What I recall of the rapid change is not to be misunderstood as any sudden prosperity or growth of national wealth. Probably, it is the reverse that may be closer to truth. While the migration from villages to cities had started acquiring unprecedented levels and agriculture had started becoming a perpetually loss-making occupation, the urban centres were witnessing a sudden unleashing of consumer aspiration. Despite the illusory growth in housing and sale of luxury goods, the Government of India was under a tremendous pressure to throw off the protective state-cover it had held over business, industry and livelihood. When *After Amnesia* was first published, in 1992, India had already accepted to open up to the rest of the world, on the terms set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and decided to 'liberalise'.

Yet, it was not only India that had been going through the economic metamorphosis. This had been happening in Brazil, Spain, Ireland and Nigeria. The wall of Berlin, standing there since the end of the Second World War as a symbolic monument of the 'no-go' between the Western 'Democracies' and the communist nations, itself had been pulled down about the time I was typing the epilogue to my essay. And, in Europe, the idea of narrow nationalism had rapidly been making space for the idea of 'Europe', a single spectrum of market and livelihood, accessed with ease by all European nations. It would seem a kind of a new world was in the throes of taking birth. Words like equality, security and justice has started looking a bit worn out and new terms such as sustainability, transparency and innovation had started dotting every-day communication. This new way of talking about the ideas of 'good', the new ways of measuring economic well-being of a society in terms of the state's 'disinvestment' capacity, the hitherto despised spread of the 'faceless' international capital and its complete command by the corporate, were all the birth-marks of the new age. In a way, the essay on amnesia I wrote in the 1980s had already been dated when it appeared in print in 1992, by which date an enormously new world had already become manifest.

In my essay, I had discussed the question of knowledge, more particularly the process that brings the status of knowledge to any set of thoughts or theory. My focus, then, was the colonial

time and the cultural processes induced by colonialism, impacting knowledge, junking some of it as non-knowledge and assigning some of it with the status of knowledge. Yet, in my essay, there was an assumption that knowledge can be identified as knowledge, that veracity indeed is the hallmark of knowledge, even if the parameters for such verification may have limits set on them by their specific cultures and histories. I had argued in the essay that memory, the non-subjective and collective memory of a society, exists as a 'real' entity even if such memory may get occluded in certain historical phases.

By the time, the essay appeared in print, both the ideas had been seriously challenged, not entirely in the domain of philosophy—though there is no dearth of theoretical texts which did so—but more substantially in the domain of every-day life. It is generally the practice to give the credit or the blame for the change to technology as well as the globalised economy. Without getting into refutation of those wide-spread common-sense arguments, I shall attempt here to discuss the place of memory, and therefore knowledge, in the new order of things. Similarly, I shall discuss the place of knowledge, and the every-day process of knowing, in the new regime of control of the mind by image. Thus, almost as 'penitence' for having published my essay at the precise moment of the great and disastrous transformation, I shall discuss the post-memory imagination and our contemporary response to it. However, before I move to that discussion, it would help us to bring into discussion some of the more transformative changes that have taken place globally. These include, the invention of Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs), postulations related to anti-matter, a new space called the cyber-space, entirely changed body-cultures, which I call 'the foreign soap culture' for reasons that will be explained in the following sections, the rise of an ego-cult that may be described as 'reckless individualism', a gender revolution, and the metaphysics of design. These are not the kind of material or cultural elements that literary criticism in India would have found necessary to account for in any past era, probably not even when I composed the previous three chapters of this essay a quarter of a century ago. Yet, the transformations brought about by these elements have had such far-reaching effect on the being and the thinking of humans that it would be naive to ignore their significance and to continue with the business of criticism in the second or the third decade

of the twenty-first century as one handled it in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The Mirror and the Lamp

Post-Memory Subjectivity and Light Emitting Diodes

The Mirror and the Lamp is the title of an illuminating book by the American critic M. H. Abrams. Its thesis, put in simple words, is that Classical English Literature was more like a mirror, while Romantic Literature took upon itself the function of providing an 'inner light', like a lamp. I would like to comment in this section on what has happened to mirrors and lamps.

In the years that I was writing the first version of this book, a Japanese engineer, four years younger than I, had been working on producing a new method of turning electricity into light. The first version of Shuji Nakamura's new electricity bulb was produced in 1992. The method was developed with the help of gallium nitride and, after several stages of technological improvement, it is in use all over the world and is known as LED, or light-emitting diode. Nakamura and two of his associates were given the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2014. The LED lamps are known to consume a lot less energy than fluorescent lamps, first made by George Inman, which had been used earlier. The LED lamps satisfied the world's craving for saving energy and achieving a significantly enhanced utility value.

LED was an iconic manifestation of the desire for a greater energy efficiency. The entire automobile industry too has been moving in that direction by infusing engineering innovation so as to make cars fuel efficient. This orientation has not been merely the result of the deepening petroleum crisis. It is in equal degree related to the idea of 'development' as 'access to energy' that was proposed during the 1960s and fully accepted by all international agencies by the end of the 1980s. In tune with this idea of development, there have been attempts to determine the ultimate limits of human development. Mathematical modelling has made it possible to assess the quantum of energy that would be available for humans if all of the light reaching the earth were to be trapped in an imaginary shell. Inspired by *Star Mark*, a science fiction novel written in 1937 by Olaf Stapledon, Freeman Dyson published a paper in 1960, 'Search for Artificial Stellar Sources of Infra-Red Radiation'

in the journal *Science* which was the first to formalise the concept of such an energy capturing shell or sphere. The Dyson sphere is expected to multiply the human accesses to usable energy trillion-folds. Although the concept is still a fantasy and it is impossible to predict if it shall not continue to be so for centuries or millennia, it clearly indicates the human craving for energy, both as a genuine material need and a strong desire. The desire, in turn, points to the deepening identity crisis. During the twentieth century, identity was a question of race, religion, nation, gender and language. For the twenty-first century societies, identity is getting increasingly aligned with technologies. Donna Haraway has commented on 'this ongoing, deepening interfacing of humans and technology as the occasion to rethink subjectivity in radical, but at the same time, *ethically responsible* ways' (Hall 2004). Haraway comments, 'in the late twentieth century, our time, a mythical time, we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism, in short, we are Cyborgs. The Cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics' (Haraway 1991: 150).

The nineteenth-century Romantic writers in Germany, France and England had agitated against the incursion of technology in the human space. What Abrams described as 'light'—intuition, inspiration and imagination—was their weapon to fight the fall-outs of industrial and urban life in the West. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was a powerful reminder that science and reason could lead humans to a devastation of the divine and the human, alike. However, what was a repugnant thought for the Romantics at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution seems to have become the order of the day two centuries later. Haraway's term 'Cyborg' describes the society whose identity is as much linked to machine as it is to nature,

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet.... From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. (Haraway 1991: 54)

During the colonial era, it was possible to think of a substantial time lag between the emergence of a literary school in Europe and a similar literary trend in India. Modernism took quite a few decades to arrive from Europe to India. However, during the last quarter of a century, this time lag has started disappearing quite rapidly.

Colour TVs had reached India just within a few years after it came in use in Europe and cell phones took not years but just months before they started invading communication. With PAN cards and the citizens' UID, Indian citizens have already come under the regime of digital identity. Even though, the times of the Mandal Commission based re-imagining of communities in India is not an event of a distant past, it is true that the identity of individuals is getting radically re-imagined today in terms of one's numerical and digital person as much it still operates in terms of the physical person. The pervasive interlocking of the digital and the physical has brought India to the threshold of what has been described as the post-truth era. To that extent, new challenges have arisen in determining significance of symbols in circulation in the Indian society. Baudrillard has proposed the idea of 'escape velocity'—the velocity required for a body to escape the gravitational pull of a planet—for describing such historical moments. 'The acceleration of modernity, of technology, events and media, of all exchanges—economic, political and sexual—has propelled us to "escape velocity", with the result that we have flown free of the referential sphere of the real and of history' (1994: 1) and as his commentator Richard Lane points out:

Technology, for Baudrillard, is the compensatory mode of being in a world which has been deprived of the symbolic dimension.... Instead of the human subject being in the world, it is now the object that is in the world, while the human subject has become an idle spectator. Worse still, the complexity of world no longer occurs at the moment of symbolic exchange ... but resides instead in everyday life of the technological object. (Lane 2003: 35).

Twenty-five years is not a long time for such fundamental shifts to occur. Yet, the changes that have been taking place in Indian society, and therefore in the self-image and imagination of India, indicate that a change of an unprecedented nature has been taking

place before our very eyes. India appears to have launched on a journey into a future which has no parallel in the past. Again, as Baudrillard maintains,

Once the apogee of time, the summit of the curve of evolution, the solstice of history had been passed, the downward slope of events began and things began to run in reverse. It seems that, like cosmic-space, historical space-time is also curved (Baudrillard 1994: 10).

His comments are not made in the context of India, though they can be gainfully considered for understanding our situation. A more pertinent way of commenting on the change would be to say that as at the beginning of the second millennium, a profound transformation—described on the first page of this book—had started taking place, an equally fundamental, or perhaps more so, transformation has begun in India at the beginning of the third millennium.

‘Phoren Soap’

In describing the nature of the transformation, at least at its surface level, let me allude to a Gujarati work of fiction. During the later part of the 1980s, the *Gadhyaparva* magazine was founded by the Gujarati poet-dramatist Bharat Naik. The focus of the magazine was to draw together writings in ‘non-standard’ Gujarati, the lexical style that was called ‘*tal-padi*’. As an ancillary activity, the *Gadhyaparva* decided to convene an annual camp of writers. This camp was given the name *sahacharya*, literally, ‘collective stay’. The writers joining the camp were expected to write something, almost anything, and read it out to the others in the camp. Some of the participating writers were primarily painters, one of whom was Bhupen Khakhar. Khakhar had by then shot into fame as a greatly experimental painter, a complete iconoclast with a brand of spirituality of his own. Till then he had not published literary works, but the *sahacharya* camps, which he attended regularly, helped him in overcoming his shyness as a writer. He wrote an unusual play with the title *Maujila Manilal* and a few works of short fiction. Though I never attended the *sahacharya* camps, I had the opportunity of listening to Khakhar, as we lived in the same city and were friends, read out his works at small gatherings of friends.

One of the stories he wrote had the rather strange title 'The Foreign Soap'. Later, I translated the story into English (in collaboration with theatre director Naushil Mehta).

The story is about disappearing or elusive satisfaction. It is a narrative about a cake of bathing soap that someone accidentally brings into a lower middle class neighbourhood. This new object quickly turns into an object of desire and gets used first by the protagonist, then a neighbour, then his wife, and their son and even the mongrel dog that the boy has acquired. As it happens to soap, it comes to an end. The loss of this soap triggers a serious existential anxiety among the two families, and the anxiety is no less intense than the one experienced by the protagonist of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Khakhar, with his acute eye for the foibles of society, was pointing to its transformation from a community to a consumer-network. The timing of the story matched the neo-liberal economic policies that had started changing India, till then in the grips of ethnic-identity politics. What is even more remarkable is that the Gujarati society that had been on the forefront of this transformation took no note of Khakhar as a writer while his paintings that had been conveying similar tensions were considered to be a good acquisition since they had become objects of desire for investors. During those years, the Marathi poet, Dilip Chitre wrote a series of essays commenting on the '*changalvad*' consumerism that had started becoming a pseudo-spiritual experience for people. The availability of a wide-ranging goods for consumption had started turning individuals into consumers and consumption into a kind of ecstasy that was previously associated with sex and spirituality. What Lawrence Birken had said about American society was rapidly becoming valid for the Indian society as well, 'As economic man realised his freedom only by submitting to the law of the market, so psychological man and woman realised their freedom only by submitting to the law of the sexual market' (Birken 1988 and 1997).

In India, the world of the 1980s was one of coping with shortages. During those years, one heard of persons who had worked their entire life and only towards the end of their working career thought of building small houses for their families. During the 1990s, young persons who had recently found their first job started owning houses purchased with loans with equated monthly instalment (EMI) schemes. Till the 1980s, the present used to be a sum total of the gains and losses accumulated during the past.

In the 1990s, the present was a sum of all possible futures. It was not noticed immediately during the early years of the consumption boom that the relationship of the present with the past and the future was undergoing such a fundamental alteration. Yet, this shift no doubt also had implications for language which rests on the distinction between the past tense, the present tense and the future tense. These implications started becoming visible a decade later when the world woke up to the fact that something terrible and as yet unnamed was affecting the health of all natural languages. UNESCO was the first international agency to ring the alarm. By the beginning of the third millennium of our history in the Christian era, it was a widespread knowledge that the human languages had started rapidly disappearing all over the world. The foreign soap of language adorning the human tongue and mind had come close to vanishing altogether.

Literature, Intellect and Networks

As mentioned earlier, the manuscript of *After Amnesia* was typed on an Italian-make portable type-writer. In those years, most of the offices in India had large office type-writers made by Godrej, a company known better for making steel locks and steel furniture. Very few academics possessed portable type-writers. One had to buy these in Western countries and bring them home after clearing complicated customs procedures at the airports. But, by the end of the 1980s, a number of electronic type-writers slowly started appearing in India. They came in just when portable telephones started becoming available in Indian markets. From the early 1990s, the type-writers started being replaced by computers. During that decade, almost all of the type-writers were replaced, and by the time India entered the twenty-first century, it had a fairly impressive access to computers. These were owned by institutions as well as individuals. By 2005, it was a common sight to see every college going girl or boy carrying a laptop almost everywhere they went. Equally common was the sight of individuals from all sections of the society carrying mobile telephones, initially small in size, and by 2015 fairly large so that they would replace lap-tops. During the 1980s, no one except the repair-shops ever discussed the width, colour or company of computer ribbons. During the 2010s, practically no one could avoid having to discuss computer apps, digital camera-types, spectrum of electro-magnetic

waves—2 G, 3 G, 4 G, etc.—and the millions or trillions of ‘bytes’ of the artificial memory one had at one’s finger tips. A lot of what the natural human memory did during the 1980s is now entirely given over to the artificial memory to perform. The collective outsourcing of memory by human societies—in India and all over the world—is so substantial that it is no longer possible to propose a sociology of memory today in the same terms as one would have done prior to the year 2000. With natural memory, ‘amnesia’ was decidedly a disorder; ‘anamnesis’ was practically a rare miracle. It required long hours of consultation on the psychiatrist’s couch; and probably, a patient suffering from the loss of memory could only re-imagine his memory rather than recovering memory as ‘it was’. The technologically held and processed memory can be ‘cured’, enhanced, renewed, compressed, encrypted, shifted, segregated, and controlled with external aids that even young adults of the 2010s can handle with utmost ease. Therefore, in 2017, the primary question for me is not ‘amnesia’ so much as it is ‘*after*’, the utter transformation of temporality in our time. The out-sourced memory of humans, now held by machines, is substantively non-temporal, all of it having a static relation with the present moment. It is as if history, or rather the idea of history, has come to a dead-end. At this juncture of the temporal-stasis, the human intellect appears to have started moving not ahead but sideways, into a new culture of man-machine-mind, Haraway’s Cyborg. While the physical universe continues to exist, the referential framework of human communication is moving closer to the semantic resources and styles made available by artificial intelligence, speech closer to the grammar of bytes and spectrums, and societies are restructuring themselves more into networks rather than speech-communities. Since memory has been traditionally of a pivotal importance in the field of knowledge and in the functional-language structures, the recent transition from natural memory to artificial memory has started causing serious transformations in what used to be ‘knowledge’ and what used to be ‘language’, both of which are at the heart of the discursive field that literary criticism was until the end of the twentieth century. The epistemic shift requires our raising fresh questions related to ‘knowledge’ and ‘language’ and, indeed, about the foundational space occupied by memory in these two areas of man’s cognitive and imaginative life.

The collapse of the temporal, to the extent it can be held as a viable portrayal of the era unfolding before us has two possible explanations—one, the technological shifts that make instant universal translation possible, and two, the neurological shifts that have started privileging image analysis over verbal communication as the more efficient means of cognition for humans. I shall attempt to briefly describe these two emerging realities.

Universal translation builds upon the hope that machine intelligence can approximate the semantic patterns of natural languages to a near total degree. Although the entire range of emotics of natural languages is still way beyond the total control of machine intelligence, the translation efficiency that machine intelligence has attained indicates that the gap between the two is closing quite rapidly. The philosophy of language and aesthetics from Bhartrihari in ancient India to Derrida in the twentieth-century France has positioned their challenges to the temporal distinction between ‘prior’ and ‘subsequent’ on their particular brands of realism that which were deeply sceptical of reality as a steady given. Bhartrihari, for instance, begins his analysis of the temporal-spectrum of meaning by pointing out the limitations of the Grammarian school of philosophy—the *Vaiyakarans*:

Grammarians consider that there are two “word-entities” in functional words; one, i.e., the *śphota*, is the cause of the production of words and the other, the speech-sound, is used in connection with meanings. Some, among the teachers of old, considered that there was a difference in essence between these two. Others, on the other hand, speak of the same undivided entity being thought various, through a difference in conceiving it. Just as the light which is in the fire-stick acts as the cause for further lights, similarly the Word which is in the mind is the cause of speech-sounds. The Word is examined in the mind, is then fixed to a specific meaning and then through the instrumentality of the speech-sounds produced through their causes. The Word is neither a “previous” nor “a subsequent”, because it is the speech sound which is produced in sequence. (Devy 2010: 22)

The linguistic philosophers preceding Bhartrihari had conceptualised ‘Meaning’, the pre-verbal stock of linguistic

cognition, and meaning, the cognition resulting out of the perception of the verbal signs, as being of 'the same essence'. Bhartrihari challenged the idea by pointing out that rather than thinking of the two domains of meaning transactions as unified and one, it would be philosophically more appropriate to consider the two instances of their existence as belonging to a single temporal span. In other words, he proposed that the ideas of 'before' and 'after' do not apply to the process of meaning production as they apply to other material events. Instead, he proposed, it would be more useful to think of a different order of temporality in which there is neither a 'before' nor an 'after' but all is 'all time', forever and is just 'is'.

The non-sequential 'is-ness' of meaning in Bhartrihari's postulation pointed to the sanctity of the 'produced' meaning as against the 'given and a pre-existent pure and absolute. Speech acts are neither less nor more than the semantic-web from which they draw sustenance, though they may differ in their essential constitution. He uses a series of fascinating metaphors to draw home this point. For instance, he points out, the image of an object held over a stream is not the object, but the two co-exist in the stream in an 'instance' without one being prior to the other. Causality in a given temporal framework would be of one kind, but would be more inconsequential if Time were to be imagined differently. '*Sphota*' is in Bhartrihari's conception the listener's realisation that the words one heard and understood and the meaning-stock in one's mind that allows one to understand them thus, are capable of linking with each other on a different plane of time. One need not rush to add the epithet, 'everlasting'. Bhartrihari was not discussing any 'everlasting time' as against an 'ephemeral moments' in his *Vakyapadiya*. Rather, he was challenging the seemingly easy way of escape into metaphysics. He therefore brought to bear upon meaning the idea of a 'transfixed time', *sphota*, which helps the cognition to open into a different order of time and then to get back from it to a normal temporality. Seen from this perspective, it may not be inappropriate to suggest that the theory of meaning by Bhartrihari points to the need to look deeper into the process of how language is interpreted *inside* the human mind.

'If writing is inaugural it is not so because it creates, but because of a certain absolute freedom of speech, because of the freedom to bring forth the already-there as a sign of the freedom

to augur. A freedom of response which acknowledges as its only horizon the world as history...', writes Jacques Derrida in 'Force and Signification' in *Writing and Difference* (1968 [1978]: 12). While Derrida has been one of the more influential of Western philosophers of the twentieth century, his theory of writing as prior to speech, with an ever eluding moment of origin, is a metaphysical view of meaning.

A non-metaphysical parallel of these ancient or recent theories is to be found in neurosciences which point to the recursive character of the human brain. Being recursive, it enables humans to produce speech and *at the same time* to think about the speech produced, to retrieve meaning out of what is heard, but *also and at the same time*, to look at what is being heard as meaning. This peculiar ability of the human brain, as distinct from the brain structures of other living species, provides us with the mental mechanism to segregate language transactions into 'transactions as they happen' and 'transactions as one observes and analyses while they are happening'.

Given the immense network of active neurons helping the language transactions within the human brain—some 85 billion of them—the 'thinking about thought' is an activity that takes place in the brain almost simultaneously with the activity of thinking. To use an every-day example, one knows what the other person is going to say even before the other person has completed the full sentence being uttered. Similarly, one knows within one's mind the unstated parts of an utterance while the 'verbal formation of the statement' is still in process. In other words, the recursive brain simply makes mockery of our commonly shared ideas of the 'prior' and the 'subsequent'. To use Bhartrihari's insight for simplifying this concept from contemporary neuroscience, the language transaction within the human mind works in terms of '*sphota*' with all simultaneity of words as symbolic tokens and words understood as meaning, and not in terms of a lingering domino-effect. Indeed, all of us are moving very rapidly to a phase of human expression in which the established notions of time will probably be entirely replaced by the flexible and simultaneous time(s). For the moment and since a term for it has not so far been coined, let me call this 'translation-time'.¹

The Olivetti type-writer I used for 'writing' *After Amnesia* used to make a noise as one punched the keys. Once characters

were typed, erasing them was generally not a considered option. Erasure involved labour. The process was close to ‘lecturing’, which involves making noise and the impossibility of erasing what is once uttered, without going into a process of correcting, through apologies, reversals of logic and explicit attempts at doing so. Over the past twenty-five years, language has become increasingly ‘silent’. Composing is much less noisy, erasures are immensely simpler than ever before, the transmission of what is ‘said’ is shrouded in absolute quietude of electronic transfer and the production of its print image is, to use John Keats’s description of inspired poetry in this completely inappropriate context, ‘as natural as leaves come to a tree’. Language is rapidly departing from its traditionally attendant attribute of sound. It is becoming increasingly silent, even silenced. It is acquiring attributes of image. Recent researches in Neurology (Corballis 2011) points to the shift in the human brain resulting into the replacement of the verbal icon by the visual image as the more efficient means of the brain’s cognitive transactions. Phenomenology, in the past, maintained that language is the means through which consciousness comes to terms with the phenomenal world. In our time, this inter-subjectivity is beginning to be achieved through visuals and images. Shelley used the term ‘poesy’—the inspired vision of a creator—in order to describe poetry that had been appearing on the printed page in his time. The anachronism was overlooked in the context of his writings. We have been using the term ‘writing’, similarly, when writing has more or less receded and the silent image of what is to be conveyed has become central in our imaginative transactions. To a large extent, literature today is alive in archaic sociology; and therefore, literary criticism is fast becoming a dated science. This is so even in post-colonial cultures, for time-lag is theoretically no longer possible in a non-temporised existence.

As with writing, so with reading, the hermeneutical communities that allowed literature to be literature are rapidly disintegrating into ‘networks’. Publication of ‘works’ have stopped drawing the attention of ‘readers’ as a generic class. And if indeed any work makes that mark, it is through extensive media support, deserved in the case or not. Instead, ‘works’ remain confined to limited interest groups, sub-language zones, fellowship-clubs, social ritual-circuits or literary or academic associations. Scientific studies about ‘reading’ suggest that the ‘reading brain’ appears to have gathered

an over-dose of fatigue (Wolf 2007), with the result that the human brain is trying to reach beyond the reading stage.

Given these unprecedented shifts in the sociology of literature, whether driven by new communication technology or information-machines, or evolutionary biology and neurological transitions, literature is no longer what it was barely a quarter century ago. The rapid substitution of verbal icons by visual images makes it impossible for us to look at the forms of creativity in the second decade of the twenty-first century with the same understanding and similar expectations as one did during the twentieth century. Although in purely numerical terms, more books get printed in India today than ever before and more individuals write and get their writings published, this does not imply that all is well with literature. Today, fewer read books than those who read them previously; and those who do read, read fewer books than they did in the past. An individual's life is filled more with digital messages, digital correspondence, digital network chat, audio-visual entertainment, cyber-space entertainment and outsourced memory. One sure symptom of these new trends is that natural languages all over the world are rapidly diminishing.

Nation, Language, Aphasia

There is in our time a worldwide concern about the alarming rise in the incidence of language disappearance. As the global South moves into a new phase of densely urbanised way of life, a somewhat willing concealment of indigenous languages has become a common occurrence. Schools in every country are increasingly engaging in training pupils to use one or the other global language. These global languages or 'mega-languages' have become, or are being perceived as threat to the local languages (Lukanovic 2010; Meierkord 2012). In a similar way, the idea of a nation-state, within which is implicit the idea of a language or languages for preserving national unity, has put stress on sub-national languages for a somewhat forced alignment. The sub-national languages or the 'regional languages' in turn have learnt to expect the migration of yet smaller language communities within their fold as a natural result of 'development', while they themselves feel uneasy in the face of the increasing influence of the 'mega-languages' and the 'national languages'. Thus, quite a hierarchy of fears and anxieties seems to have besieged languages all over the world.

The fear and anxiety have gripped even the mega-languages, for distinct continental varieties of these languages are emerging and are beginning to become increasingly dissimilar (Barber et al. 1993; Bragg 2003; William 2010). The concern for 'disappearing language' has touched every mind on a scale never before experienced in human history. It is argued that while languages always go through the 'natural cycle' of rise and decline, in our time the incidence of a very rapid decline of natural languages has assumed worrisome proportions (Crystal 2000; Nettle 2000; Florey 2010). In recent years, as never before in the history of the discipline of language study and Linguistics, books on language endangerment and language decline have been appearing in a rapid succession. The discussion on language endangerment and the conservation of threatened languages has received endorsement from UNESCO as well (Wurn 2005; Mosley 2010).

Over the past two decades, scientists have come up with mathematical models for predicting the life of languages (Braggs and Freedman 1993). These predictions have invariably indicated that the human species is moving rapidly close to extinction of a large part of its linguistic heritage. These predictions do not agree on the exact magnitude of the impending disaster, but they all agree on the fact that close to three quarters or more of all existing natural human languages are half in the grave. There are, on the other hand, advocates of linguistic globalisation. The processes of globalisation have found it necessary to promote homogenised cultures. This idea has found support among the classes that stand to benefit by the globalisation of economies. They would prefer the spread of one or only a few languages all over the world so that communication across national boundaries becomes the easiest ever. Obviously, the nations and communities that have learnt to live within only a single language, whose economic well-being is not dependent on knowing languages other than their own, whose knowledge systems are well-secure within their own languages, will not experience the stress of language loss, at least not immediately, even though the loss of the total language heritage of the world, which will weaken the global stock of human intellect and civilisations, will have numerous indirect enfeebling effects on them too. Since it is language mainly of all things that makes us human and distinguishes us from other species and animate nature (Blench and Spriggs 2012; McMahon and McMahon 2012), and since the human consciousness can but

function given the ability for linguistic expression, it becomes necessary to recognise language as the most crucial aspect of cultural capital.

It has taken human beings the continuous work of about half-a-million years to accumulate this valuable capital (Corballis 2011). In our time, we have come close to the point of losing most of it. Historians of civilisation tell us that probably a comparable, though not exactly similar, situation had arisen in the past some seven or eight thousand years ago (Crystal 2000). This was when human beings discovered the magic of nature that seeds are. When the shift from an entirely hunting-gathering or pastoralist economies to early agrarian economies started taking place, we are told, the language diversity of the world was severely affected (Blench and Spriggs 2012; Corballis 2011). It may not be wrong to surmise that the current crisis in human languages too is triggered by the fundamental economic shift that have enveloped the entire world, north or south, west or east. This time though, the crisis has an added theme as a lot of the human activity is dominated by man-made intelligence.

The technologies aligned with artificial intelligence have all been depending heavily on modelling the activity of the human mind along linguistic transactions. Intelligent machines modelled after entirely neurological or psychological systems are still not commonly in use. Language-based technologies are now well-entrenched partners in the semantic universe(s) that bind human communities together (Gillespie 2007). Therefore that universe is being re-shaped. Language today is as much a system of meaning in the cyberspace, effecting communication between a machine and another machine as much as it has been a system of meaning in a social space, achieving communication between a human being and another human being.

It is believed that there were approximately 6,000 natural languages at the turn of the present millennium. Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Nigeria and India have been the countries known for highest language density. Although it is difficult to say with any precision as to how many living languages India has, there are various pointers in that direction. The most useful among these is the data from the 1961 census, which presented a list of 1,652 'mother tongues'. Considering that not every mother tongue label that turns up in the census is necessarily a language, the actual figure of living languages in 1961 was understandably lower. It

was estimated to be about 1,100. Beginning with the 1971 census, the data disclosed in the public domain by the census authorities lists only the languages which have more than 10,000 speakers. The 2001 census data has shown 122 languages, of which 22 are scheduled languages and a 100 others qualify to be listed in the disclosed data. When George Abraham Grierson carried out his survey in the early years of the twentieth century, he had listed 179 languages and over five hundred dialects. *The People's Linguistic Survey of India*, a non-governmental undertaking, lists more than 750 languages; but this figure is arrived at by listing as languages what Grierson would have happily classified as 'dialects'. Given these enormous variations in the estimation of the precise number of living languages in India, the language diversity in the country has become a surveyor's despair. Yet, what is clear is that a substantially large number of languages are dying. The People's Linguistic Survey's list can at best be stretched to a figure of 850, taking into account the approximately 70 or 80 languages that it could not cover owing to their remoteness and obscurity. Yet, it cannot be denied that in comparison with the situation in 1961, approximately 250 languages appear to have died. That a quarter of a thousand languages should have vanished in 50 years is indicative of the epidemic scale of language disappearance.

In pre-colonial epistemologies of language, hierarchy in terms of a 'standard' and a 'dialect' was not common. Language diversity was accepted as a fact of life. Literary artists could use several languages within a single composition, and their audience accepted the practice as normal. Great works like the epic *Mahabharata* continued to exist in several versions handed down through a number of different languages almost till the beginning of the twentieth century (Deshpande 1978). When literary critics theorised, they took into account literature in numerous languages. Matanga's medieval compendium of styles, *Brihad-desi* (Jiarazbhoy 1975), is an outstanding example of criticism arising out of the principle that language diversity is normal. During the colonial times, many of India's languages were brought into the print medium. It is not that previously writing was not known. Scripts were already used; paper too was used as a means for reproducing written texts. However, despite being 'written', texts had been circulating mainly through oral means. Print technology diminished existing oral traditions. New norms of literature were introduced, privileging the written

over the oral, which brought in the idea that a literary text needs be essentially monolingual. These ideas, and the power relation prevailing in the colonial context, started affecting the stock of languages in India. The languages that had not been placed within the ambit of print technology came to be seen as 'inferior' languages.

After Independence, the Indian states were created on the basis of language. If a language had a script, and if the language had *printed* literature in it, it was given a separate state within the Union of India. Languages that did not have printed literature, even though they had rich tradition of oral literature, were not considered. Further, the official language of the state was used as a medium of primary and high school education within that given state. A special Schedule of Languages (The Eighth Schedule) was created within the Indian Constitution. In the beginning it had a list of 14 languages. At present, the list has 22 languages in it. It became obligatory for the government to commit all education related expenditure on these languages alone. The 'Margins' of the Indian language spectrum, constituted by the indigenous peoples and the nomadic communities are thus marginalised mainly due to the 'aphasia' being systemically imposed on them.

Prior to the hierarchy of languages determined in terms of languages being printed, written but not in print, and merely spoken without having any script came into vogue, the Indian states had almost never been 'linguistic states'. They had been predominantly poly-lingual or multi-lingual. Therefore, when the spirit of nationalism started developing in India, the idea of forming a single language nation never crept into the thinking of any of the Indian nationalists, despite the differences between the ideological positions of the leaders during the freedom struggle. India as seen by them was already a single nation with many languages and also going to continue being one. The long and involved discussions in the Constituent Assembly from 1946 to 1949 provide ample testimony to the general acceptance of the idea of India as a nation with many languages. However, the Constituent Assembly had to resolve the contradiction between the astronomically large numbers of languages—of which it knew through Grierson's Survey—and the need for a nationally shared language of communication. The Constituent Assembly debates on this issue remained fairly inconclusive, resulting into the adoption of the special Schedule of Languages, the Eighth Schedule of

the Constitution (Sarangi 2009). It is generally believed by the post-independence generations that the formation of the Eighth Schedule contributed towards restructuring of Indian provinces into linguistic states. This popular perception has no basis in the history of state formation in India.

It was Sir Herbert Risley, then the Home Secretary, who wrote to the Bengal government in 1903 bringing in language as the divisive principle. As a result, Bengal was proposed to be partitioned in 1905 into East Bengal and West Bengal. When the idea of using language as the defining principle for demarcating provinces appeared in the Congress Session of 1917, Annie Besant strongly opposed it. A decade later, at its Nagpur Session in 1927, the Congress accepted the idea of linguistic distribution of the states. After independence, while Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the principle, and the Linguistic Provinces Commission was set up in 1948, he cautioned against language becoming a threat to India's national unity. During the early 1950s, Andhra Pradesh became the first such Linguistic State to be created in the wake of a violent popular agitation. In 1953, the State Reorganisation Commission was set up; however, two years later, Nehru was still trying to understand how the USSR had implemented this principle, and thus S. G. Barve was deputed to the USSR to study the Russian experience. That year, assured by the USSR experience, 14 States and nine Union Territories were created. In the 1960s, Punjab was created, as a result of the agitation led by Sant Fatehsingh and Master Tarasing, and during the 1970s the North-eastern States were created. The process of creation of smaller states, making language the central part of the arguments for creating them, has continued in India ever since Independence. The most recent instances of this process has been the agitation for creating a separate Telangana, the demand for a separate Vidarbha State and the splitting up of Uttar Pradesh into four zones. The entire process indicates clearly that though India accepted the nineteenth century ideas of nationalism as the basis of the Indian freedom struggle without accepting the idea of 'a nation as a linguistic singular', and though the Constituent Assembly debates displayed abundant respect for the idea of India as 'a linguistically plural nation', language identity has played an important role in shaping the process of restructuring states (Schwartzberg 2009). Implicit in the process is the flawed logic that every language that has a script, or has entered print technology

and therefore has produced some of its literature in print, needs to assert its identity through aspiring to form a state within the 'nation as a language plural'.

The Millennial Cycle

The opening sentences in the first chapter of *After Amnesia* read as follows, 'The cultural forms developed in classical India from the third to the tenth centuries started undergoing momentous changes at the beginning of the present millennium. The most fundamental of these was the emergence of new languages—*bhashas*—all over the Indian subcontinent' (*After Amnesia*, p. 5).

Today, one has to point to another fundamental change, but of the reverse kind. At the beginning of the third millennium, a thousand years after the historical period referred to in the above statements, a new phenomenon has been affecting the *bhashas*, threatening their very survival. Although the time span of ten centuries has no logical relation with the longevity of languages, it is as if the millennial cycle has come full circle. The intention of the chapter was to show how the *bhashas* replaced very capably knowledge-traditions of the Sanskrit language, and how the colonial experience impacted the cultural memory of that new emergence and its creative energy. Today, we have to account for the linguistically disempowering impact of technology, globalisation and the neurological evolution. But is there not any possibility of a new life to the *Bhashas* or an empowering transformation? Is there no substitute for what we lose with the vanishing memory that humans have chosen to outsource, and is not there a new trajectory of the imagination that may open up vistas of creativity that humans have not previously known? The answers to these anxious questions can be formulated not by falling back upon any linguistic chauvinism but by going to the heart of colonialism in the past and globalisation in the recent past in order to seek ways of resistance. One can point out, of course, numerous differences between the economics and the politics of colonialism on the one hand and globalisation on the other. Yet, what places them in a relation of continuity is their attempt at minimising diversities existing in the subject-cultures or ignoring them altogether. The colonial masters attempted to 'civilise' the colonies by trying to re-imagine the colonies in the shape of little-Englands and little-Frances, as homes away from home. The interest they took in the cultures of the colonies was invariable of a pragmatic nature and

rarely of any idealistic kind. The international capital that is driving the corporate globalisation is similarly, and in a far more deadly a manner, impervious to the cultural diversities of the consumer locations and the marketing sites. Uniform and predictable cultural patterns displayed by global consumers, is what they are trying to engineer. Diversity of any kind is seen as being inconvenient and anti-growth. In this situation, creativity that will uphold diversity of every kind becomes as crucially important as the anti-colonial struggles were during the twentieth century. Obviously, literature, cinema, theatre, visual arts, music, craft, graphic arts, architecture, digital humanities, and similar branches of the arts and aesthetics will have a chance of survival and a future if they espouse natural and cultural diversity.

As stated in the first chapter of this book, the emergence of diverse language traditions and sustained traditions of creative literature in them was a phenomenal event in Indian cultural history. It is thanks to that history of creativity that those languages came to acquire the status of Scheduled Languages in the Indian constitution. During the current century, Indian literature and literary studies will have to go beyond these 'received' languages and turn to other languages, those of the hill communities, the nomads, the adivasis, the sign languages and the language cultures of the transgender (such the Koti language). The capital-driven and the faceless globalisation devoted to a ruthless adherence to the market calls for creation and recognition of the voices that come from the informal, non-institutional, unorganised, marginal and, therefore, vibrant. One should add that the literature of those who believe that they belong to the earth and not that the earth belongs to them alone may recover with imagination what we lose with the fast-eroding human memory. However, since all of such forms of creativity are likely to come from outside the academia and formal institutions, literary criticism in contemporary times will have to be nothing short of activism for espousing the diversity of the marginal and the local as an antidote to the dominant and the global.

Diversity, Today

The first decade of the present century was marked in Indian literature by the emergence of the expression of the voice of the indigenous communities. Throughout the decade, there has been a remarkable manifestation of this voice through little magazines in

various tribal languages. Previously, the literary creativity of the indigenous communities came to us solely through the recordings made by anthropologists, linguists and folklorists. Besides, the translations through which the folklore was rendered were largely unreadable. Perhaps, the only exception was of the works by Verrier Elwin. In a way, the imaginative life of the '*janajatis*', as the official term describes them, or the *adivasis* of India, has remained inaccessible to the rest of the country.

The social isolation and marginalisation of the *adivasis* began during the colonial times. When the Portuguese arrived in India they developed a descriptive apparatus for referring to Indian communities by coining the term 'tribe'. The term was drawn from ancient Roman practice of describing the speakers of peripheral languages as 'tribes'. The British refined the concept further and started using the term only for those communities that did not show state formation as the central feature of social organisation. Understandably, these 'tribes' were forest-dwellers, untouched by capital economy. In the 1870s, communities singled out by the colonial British were enumerated and a list of Indian tribes was created. Another list pertaining to nomadic communities was drawn up as the list of Criminal Tribes (1871). Prior to the colonial intrusion in the life of these communities, they had a close engagement with the rest of the Indian society in terms of cultural production. Many of India's major dance styles originated among them. It is believed that an epic like the *Ramayana* was composed by a forest-dweller; and as far as the origin of fiction-writing in India is concerned, it is a historical fact that the *Ocean of Stories* or *Katha-saritasagar* of Gunadhya was written in Paisachik, or what the colonial British would have described as a tribal language. This dialogical cultural relation was snapped forever due to colonial anthropological engineering. During the early part of the twentieth century when the *dalits* started registering their voice in Indian literature, the *adivasis* kept themselves entirely within the confines of their oral tradition of epics, stories and songs. In fact, it took a sympathetic observer like Verrier Elwin to articulate on behalf of the *adivasis*, for they themselves remained quiet. Even after Independence, the fiction of the *adivasis* had to find expression through the writings of Gopinath Mohanty and Mahasveta Devi, who were sympathetic to the plight of the *adivasis* in full measure but were not *adivasis* themselves.

It is in this context that Narayan's *Kocharethi* acquires a tremendous historical significance. *Kocharethi* written in 1988 and published in 1998 in Malayalam is decidedly the first novel by a tribal Indian writer. It is important both as history and as literature. It is even more important to look at it as a work that lights up the path for the emerging voices of the adivasis all over the sub-continent. If the visibility of tribal languages has remained somewhat poor, those languages need not be blamed for the want of creativity. The responsibility rests with the received idea that literature has to be *written and printed* as well. Tribal literary traditions have been oral in nature. After print technology started impacting Indian languages during the nineteenth century, the fate of the oral became precarious. A gross cultural neglect had to be faced by the languages which remained outside print technology. The history of tribals during the past sixty years is filled with stories of forced displacement, land alienation and increasing marginalisation, eruption of violence and counter-violence by the state. Going by any parameters of development, the tribals always figure at the tail end. The situation of the communities that have been pastoral or nomadic has been even worse. Considering the immense odds against which tribals have been fighting, it is not short of a miracle that they have preserved their languages and continue to contribute to the amazing linguistic diversity of India. The number of languages in which Indian tribal communities have been expressing themselves is amazingly large. When one speaks of Indian tribal literature, one is necessarily speaking of all these. Some twenty years ago, I decided to approach languages such as Kukna, Bhili, Gondi, Mizo, Garo, Santhali, Kinnauri, Garhwali, Dehwali, Warli, Pawri and so on, expecting to find at the most a few hundred songs and stories in them. Having documented over a ten thousand printed pages of these, publishing a dozen magazines and fifty-odd books containing tribal imaginative expression, I am a much humbled man. If a systematic publication programme were created to document tribal literature in India, easily several hundred titles can be launched just containing the oral traditions in them. The story does not end there.

Tribals have taken to writing. Many tribal languages have now their own scripts or have taken recourse to the state scripts. Some four decades ago, when dalit literature started drawing the nation's attention towards it, it was usual to think of even the tribal writers

among them as part of the dalit movement. In Marathi, for instance, Atmaram Rathod, Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, all from nomadic tribal communities, were hailed as dalit writers. At that time, the North-east was no more than a rumour to the rest of India. One was perhaps aware of the monumental collections presented by Verrier Elwin, but there was no inkling of tribal creativity. It is only during the past twenty years that various tribal voices and works have started making their presence felt. The last two decades have demonstrated that tribal literature is no longer merely folk songs and folk tales. It now encompasses other complex genres such as the novel and drama. There is now a greater understanding among tribal activists all over the country that tribal identity and culture cannot be preserved unless the tribal languages and literature are foregrounded. Over the past four decades, a mainstream writer like Mahashveta Devi had been writing on behalf of the tribals. That situation has changed now. The voice of the tribals themselves is now beginning to be heard.

Falsely Charged as Thieves

Besides the adivasi tribals, there have been in India 'tribals' of another variety. They are described as 'denotified and nomadic tribes.' The colonial regime placed on them the stigma of criminality. The first Criminal Tribes Act was formulated in 1871. From 1871–1924, where the last modification of this Act came about, something like 191 communities were brought under the purview of this Act, beginning with the North West Frontier and going up to the Nizam's state, Hyderabad. In 1952, some years after the rest of India gained Independence, these communities were freed. Because the earlier notification had to be annulled, these people came to be known as the de-notified communities. Most of them had been nomadic in habit in the past. They were wandering singers, entertainers, rope-walkers, snake-charmers, medicine men. Because they were nomadic in habit, they came to be known as the de-notified and nomadic communities or tribes, very different from the adivasis. In 1952, when they came out of the settlement, after about seven decades of imprisonment spread over several generations, they were fully stigmatised. A whole field of knowledge was built round this wrong notion that everyone in this community is a born criminal. After Independence, the public in general and police in particular contributed to the miseries of

these communities. The old Criminal Tribes Act had been removed and was replaced by what is known as the Habitual Offenders' Act. The Habitual Offenders' Act was exactly the same, word to word, short of saying that these were born criminals. Not having land, they had to learn a variety of new professions. The total population of such people in India is approximately six crores.

Some years back, Mahashveta Devi brought the awareness of the existence of the DNTs to Gujarat. In Bengal, near Purulia, in a community called 'Khediasabar', there had been a custodial death of a young man called Budhan. The young man was named so because he was born on a Wednesday (Budhwar). He was not a criminal, but was taken to the police custody, beaten up and then kept as an under-trial prisoner for a few days where he was further tortured. He died in the prison cell there. The police and the jail officials tried to depict his death as a suicide. But the *gamchha* (a cloth used as towel) with which he reportedly tried to hang himself did not belong to him. Mahashveta Devi had filed a case in the Calcutta High Court. As a result a second post mortem was carried out. The Calcutta High Court gave a very positive judgement in this case. While all this was happening in Bengal, Mahashveta Devi had come to Baroda to give a lecture. She spoke, with tears in her eyes, on the DNTs. Some of us felt very deeply moved by what she had said and decided to form a De-notified and Nomadic Tribes' Rights Action Group. A few months later the Calcutta High Court judgment came. In these intervening months, she and I had made a journey to Chharanagar in Ahmedabad. If you ever go to Ahmedabad and ask somebody to take you to Chharanagar, the first thing they will say is, 'Do not go there. Those people are very dangerous. They are thieves and you shouldn't go there'. Nobody allowed us to go there, but somehow we managed to get there. We got a group of young people together and set up a small library. So some artists and writers started going to Chharanagar. A group of youngsters started interacting with them. When the judgment came out, I decided to print the entire High Court judgment in a magazine which I had started with the title 'Budhan', on the influence of this particular case. That became a magazine of the DNTs. That judgment was printed in 'Budhan' and young boys in Chharanagar decided to make a play out of this judgment. They were not actors. They did not know what theatre meant. But they decided to enact the play because it reflected what had been their life experience as most of

their parents had been in jail or had been killed by the police, or had been forced to make liquor. Till then, in Chharanagar, every girl, by the time she was 14 or 15, was usually forced to brew illicit liquor, and every young man, even if he was educated, was forced to get into the liquor vending business.

When the young boys and girls in Chharanagar decided to produce the play, they did not know that it was a play. They just thought that they were presenting this story to the other Chharas who could not have possibly read the '*Budhan*' magazine in English, in which it was printed. Out of their performance was born a novel genre of flexible theatre. It became effective because it was the story about the audience itself. And everybody, when they saw it, was angry. They wanted to cry, they became very excited. When I saw it the first time, I felt so deeply moved that I decided to invite some others from Ahmedabad—writers and artists. Some of them did venture out and visited Chharanagar, though hesitantly, and felt very deeply moved. This play then started going out, to Bhopal, Delhi and Bombay. Somebody made a video show and it was taken to the United States. It was produced there by some Americans. And somebody in St. Xavier's College in Bombay decided to produce the English version of '*Budhan*'.

When I put together an anthology of tribal literature and literature of the DNTs, I decided to include a written version of this play in an English translation. That went out to a few other countries and it was produced. For several years, I had been building committees of people among the 'Chamhtas', the stone engravers or the stone crushers, 'Vadis', 'Vispadas', 'Turis', 'Dafers', 'Bajnaias', 'Dauri Gosavi' and such other communities. In Baroda, about 4-5 km. from Chani, one Bhikabhai Bajani was caught by people in the society, tied to a tree with a rope, beaten to a pulp and killed. When I saw the news, I asked the police if they were investigating the case and found out that they were not. So I had to go and sit on a 'dharna' outside the Police Commissioner's office. Finally, after several days, the Commissioner agreed to visit the place incognito. He came in plain clothes with me. The killers were arrested. The 'Bajania' wanted to celebrate their little victory and they did this with drums and singing 'bhajans'. These committees of different communities that were created felt quickened by any artistic activity. They responded very spontaneously to dance, song or drama—or just any performance. My colleague, Gujarati poet

Kanji Patel and I felt that a new creativity had started springing up in an unconventional 'literary' sense. So we decided that we should bring all of them together to watch each others' performances. We located a place called Kaleshwari in Panchmahals, which is an archaeological site and because is called Kaleshwari—from 'kala'—the art element is there and because the place was not used by any other religion, we decided to congregate there. Because most of these people now engage in daily wage labour, they take a day off on 'amavasya' (no moon) day. We found that '*Shivratri*' is one day they take a day off from wherever they are doing. Just as *adivasis* take a day off during holi, the DNTs normally take a day off around '*Shivratri*'. So we decided to call them there and merely by word of mouth, they came in thousands, and there were people walking on ropes, playing with drums, dancing, bringing all kinds of musical instruments. They came and performed throughout the day, in the Kaleshwari compound. The following year they went there again. Twenty years later, the *mela* continues, its scale increasing year after year. Thus began a new genre of collective creative expression. The Kaleshwari *mela* is an exhilarating experience; it does not fail to stir one's imagination.

The Post-Memory Imagination

The political eco-system of the twenty-first century, two hundred years after the French Revolution, is seeking to consolidate orthodoxies and conservatism to an extreme degree. Democracies all over the world have started showing signs of an unfathomable fatigue. The extreme right and its non-state private armies have achieved a measure of success in capturing social spaces and institutional havens. Violence of a shockingly brutal variety and terrorism of many shades have become the every-day narrative. State surveillance and invasion of citizens' privacy are the order of the day. Technologies have facilitated actualisation of tyrannical intent. The free-wheeling capital and the ever-expanding markets have succeeded in spawning a generation of consumers seduced towards a reckless individualism and the inter-locking between artificial intelligence and the human intellect has substantially altered the business of being human. Natural languages are rapidly evaporating and approaching the condition of a collective aphasia. Literature is getting closer to media creating a new heady amalgam of the natural and the digital, the post-truth. In such a situation,

linguistic and cultural diversity, actions at the margins and creating unconventional and collective forms of expression becomes the primary strategy for the survival of human expression. In an era in which memory has managed to acquire 'escape speed' and leapt outside human consciousness, language-activism and cultural heterodoxy appear to be the only means available for subversion and resistance. The post-memory imagination has to be the imagination arising out of commitment to diversity, to marginal voices and through activist practice. The primary concerns of literary criticism in the times of silence, aphasia and intolerance have to be of solidarity, protest and expression, of *abhivyakti*. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, I had proposed 'an open-eyed nativism' as a way of overcoming the cultural amnesia induced by colonialism. In the first quarter of the twenty-first century, I propose 'activism for espousing diversity' as the means of negotiating the transition from our being human to our becoming cyborgs.

Dharwad

15 May 2017

Notes and References

INTRODUCTION

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2. *Gujarātī Sāhityāno Itihāsa*, 4 Volumes, Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, edited by Umashankar Joshi, Anantrai Raval and Yashwant Shukla, Vol. III, *Dalapatrāmthī Kalāpi* (Ahmedabad, 1978).
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4. See Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (New Delhi, 1987).
5. The only notable publication on this subject in Indian English is Sujit Mukherjee's *Towards a Literary History of India* (Simla, 1975) and the only book in Marāṭhī is the one edited by Dattatraya Punde, *Vangmayetihāsāchi Sankalpanā* (Pune, 1986).
6. For an excellent bibliography of all 'Indological' histories of Indian Literature, see Sujit Mukherjee (1975), pp. 92–103.
7. Sir William Jones, 'Discourse', from *Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. I (pp. 19–34), reproduced in *A Reader in Nineteenth Century Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, edited by Winfred P. Lehmann (Bloomington & London, 1967), pp. 7–20 (p. 12).

TRADITION AND AMNESIA

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2. Though it is certain that Mukundarāja preceded Jñānadeva, the exact chronology has not yet been established. Tulpule (1979), p. 25.
3. For an exhaustive analysis and history of Sanskrit poetics the following titles are useful: P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, fourth edition (Delhi, 1971); S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, second revised edition (Calcutta, 1960): both published originally in 1923; Edwin Gerow, *Indian Poetics, A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. V, Fasc. 3 (Wiesbaden, 1977).
4. Eliot Deutsch and J. A. V. van Buitenen, *A Source Book of Advaita Vedanta* (Honolulu, 1971).
5. P. V. Kane (1971), pp. 208–18.
6. Edwin Gerow (1977), p. 279.
7. Tulpule (1979), p. 326.
8. *Modern India and the West*, edited by L. S. S. O'Malley (London, 1941), p. 587.
9. See W. H. G. Armytage, *Four hundred years of English Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1964); *Educational Documents: England and Wales—1816 to the Present Day*, edited by J. Stuart Maclure, Methuen (London, 1965/86); Edward Hulmes, *Educational and Cultural Diversity*, Longman (Essex, 1989).
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11. V. K. Rajawade, 'The Novel (1902)', translated by Shanta Gokhale, *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 8 (1984), pp. 74–88 (p. 87).
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13. Manasukhalal Jhaveri, 'Literary Criticism: Gujarātī', in *Writing in India*, edited by Nissim Ezekiel, The Seventh P. E. N. All-India Writers' Conference (Bombay, 1865), pp. 77–83.
14. *Comparative Indian Literature*, Vol. II, edited by K. M. George (Madras, 1986).
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17. Suresh Joshi in an unpublished interview with John Stachniewski (1985).
18. *Indian Critical Thought*, edited by S. K. Desai and G. N. Devy (Delhi, 1987), p. 2.
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20. B. S. Mardhekar, *Arts and Man* (London, 1937); *Saundarya āṇi Sāhitya* (Bombay, 1955).
21. Patankar, 'Aesthetics: Some Important Problems' (1984), p. 65.
22. Krishna Rayan, *Suggestion Today* (London, 1966); Nagendra, 'All Time Relevance of the *Rasa* Theory', paper read at the First Conference of Comparative Indian Literature Association (Delhi, 1984).
23. A school of criticism, designated 'Nativism', has emerged in Marāṭhi literature during the last fifteen years. It is led by the novelist-critic Bhalchandra Nemade, and has become widely influential. The main emphasis of this school is on evolving the standards of criticism from the native context and on minimizing formalistic 'universal' standards in assessment of fiction.
24. Murrey Krieger, *Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and its System* (Baltimore and London, 1976), p. 54.
25. M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1899); R. C. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Language* (London, 1965).
26. Bhalchandra Nemade maintains that the concept of culture is expressed in Marāṭhi through the term '*sanskriti*', though the meaning intended is growth and development. Nemade (1986). In colloquial Marāṭhi, Gujarāṭi and Hindi, and perhaps in other *bhāṣās*, the term 'culture' and the term '*sanskriti*' are used as interchangeable terms.
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30. For the essays by G. S. Amur, Krishna Rayan, R. B. Patankar, see *Critical Thought*, edited by S. K. Desai and G. N. Devy (Delhi, 1986); for Kantak's essay, *New Quest*, 44 (March–April 1984), pp. 70–82.
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32. S. S. Prawer, *Comparative Literary Studies* (London, 1973), p. 1.
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37. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
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40. Susan Langer, *Feeling and Form* (London, 1953), p. 323.
41. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery Under Colonialism* (Delhi, 1983).
42. Madhav Deshpande, 'History, Change and Permanence: A Classical Indian Perspective', in *Contributions of South Asian Studies*, Vol. I, edited by Gopal Krishna (Delhi, 1979), pp. 1–28 (pp. 10–11).
43. Sir William Jones, *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 19–34, reproduced in *A Reader in Nineteenth Century Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, edited by Winfred P. Lehmann (Bloomington & London, 1967), pp. 7–20.
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46. *Selections from Macaulay: Letters, Prose, Speeches and Poetry*, edited by E. V. Downs and G. L. Davies (London, 1932), p. 59. One execrable effect the climate produces. It destroys all the works of man with scarcely one exception. Steel rusts; razors lose their edge; thread decays; clothes fall to pieces: books moulder away, and drop out of their bindings; plaster cracks; timber rots; matting is in shreds.
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62. *Gujarāṭī Sāhityāno Itihāsa*, Vol. II (1460–1850), edited by Umashankar Joshi, Anantrai Raval and Yashawant Shukla (Ahmedabad, 1976), p. 16. [Quotation translated by G. N. Devy.]
63. Dattatraya Punde (Pune, 1986).
64. Ibid., appendix pp. 3–23.
65. Ibid., pp. 31–33.
66. Ibid., pp. 92–101.

67. M. N. Srinivas (1966), p. 76.
68. 'Recollection: Indian and Platonic', *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*, Vol. II, edited by Roger Lipsey, Bollingen series LXXXIX, Princeton University Press (Princeton, 1977), pp. 49–65.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–53.
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A NEVER-ENDING TRANSITION

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
3. Edward Said (1978); V. G. Kiernan (1969).
4. R. Sencourt (1923).
5. James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs: A Narrative of Seven Years Residence in India*, second edition revised by Countess de Montalembert, Vol. I (London, 1834), p. 330.
6. A. K. Forbes (1821–65) was appointed Assistant Judge at Ahmedabad in Gujarat, studied Gujarāṭī language, literature and history. He established the Andrews Library at Surat in 1850. With the help of Dalpatrām (1820–98), he collected old manuscripts, historical and archaeological materials. He founded, in 1848, the Gujarat Vernacular Society at Ahmedabad, and published the two volumes of his *Rasamālā* (1956) describing the vanishing glories of Gujarat. He also encouraged the launching of *Vartamān*, the first Gujarāṭī newspaper, in 1849. He was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay Univesity (1864), where he founded the *Gujarāṭī Sabhā* (Literary Academy of Gujarāṭī) to carry out research. The *Sabhā* was named after him on his death the same year (August 1865).
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8. *Travels in Mogul Empire, AD 1656–68*, by Francois Bernier, translated from the French and edited by Archibald Constable (1891), re-edited by Vincent Smith (London, 1934), pp. 228–9.

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20. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–9.
21. Romila Thapar (1983), pp. 241–88.
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26. *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Dissent in India*, edited by S. N. Eisenstadt, R. Kahane and D. Shulman (Berlin, 1984).
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66. Francois Bernier (1891), p. 298. For a detailed study of Mughal architecture and the Italian influence on it see Ebba Koch, 'Pietre Dure and Other Artistic Contacts Between the Court of the Mughals and that of the Medici' in *A Mirror of Princes*, edited by Dalu Jones, Marga Publications (date not mentioned), pp. 29–56.
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THE POST-MEMORY IMAGINATION

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Index

- Abercrombie, Lascelles, 118
Abhimānacinha, 79
Abhinavagupta, 7, 25, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 74, 87
Abrams, M. H., 105
Ācārya, Sitākanta, 40
Addison, Joseph, 11
Aiyar, Rajan, 41
Akbar, 38, 64
Akhā, 42, 58, 60
Al Beruni, 84
Allama Prabhu, 91
Allesch, von, 107
Amur, G. S., 19, 28, 107
Ānandavardhana, 7, 14, 45, 68, 69, 71, 81, 107
Aristotle, 14, 19, 20, 109, 118
Arnold, Matthew, 103, 104, 105, 112
Auckland, Lord, 73, 79
Aurobindo, Sri, 4, 14, 82, 102, 103, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 119
Avantisundarī, 73, 79

'Budhan', 156, 157
Bacon, Sir Francis, 106
Bajnaia, 157
Ballhatchet, Kenneth, 96
Barber, Charles, 146
Bārdāloi, Rajanikānta, 40
Barni, Ziaud-din, 45
Basaveśwar (Basavaṇṇa), 42, 91
Baudrillard, Jean, 136, 137
Baxi, Ramprasad, 45
Bedekar, D. K., 45, 48
Bell, Clive, 14, 117, 118

Bernier, Francois, 58, 59, 94
Besant, Annie, 150
Bhāmaha, 7, 68, 71, 79
Bharata, 7, 14, 19, 20, 25, 45, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 79, 81, 87, 109, Bhāravi, 73
Bhartrihari, 141, 142, 143
Bhaṭṭanāyaka, 67
Bhikabhai Bajani, 157
Bhoja, 7, 25, 67, 71
Bhawan, Miān, 64
Bhayani, Harivallabh, 46
Birken, Lawrence, 138
Blake, William, 43
Blench, Roger, 146, 147
Bloom, Harold, 37
Bosanquet, 118
Bragg, Melvyn, 146
Buddha, Gautam, 74
Buhler, 107
Burke, Edmund, 98

Carlyle, Thomas, 105, 107
Cerusseri, 40
Chamhtas, 157
Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, 40
Chatterjee, Partha, 3
Chatterjee, Suniti Kumar, 32
Chharanagar, 156, 157
Chitre, Dilip, 138
Cetti, Narahari Gopālkr̥ṣṇa, 41
Chokhā Mahār, 75
Clive, Robert, 92, 93
Cohn, Bernard, 100
Coleridge, S. T., 118

- Collingwood, 107, 118
 Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., 28, 32, 82,
 108, 112, 114
 Corballis, Michael C., 144, 147
 Criminal Tribes, 153
 Croce, Bernadetto, 103, 118
 Crystal, David, 146, 147

 Dādobā Paṇḍurang, 2
 Dafers, 157
 Dalhousie, Lord, 17, 32
 Daṇḍin, 7, 23, 24, 68, 71, 72
 Dante, Alighieri, 43
 Datta-cult, 86
 Dauri Gosavi, 157
 Dayārām, 49, 58
 De, Sushil Kumar, 45
 Derozio, Henry, 36
 Derrida, Jacques, 24, 143
 Desai, S. K., 13
 Deshpande, C. R., 148
 Deshpande, Madhav, 28
 Devarāja, 79
 Devi, Mahashveta, 155, 156
 Dhananjaya, 67
 Dhanapāla, 79
 Dikṣitar, Ayyappa, 45
 Droṇa, 79
 Dryden, John, 43, 57, 58
 Dumont, Louise, 70
 Duśyanta, (character in *Śākuntala*),
 26, 27
 Dyson, Freeman, 134

 Eagleton, Terry, 103, 104, 111
 Eisenstadt, S. N., 70
 Eknāth, 47, 68, 76, 86
 Eliot, T. S., 19, 29, 107, 118
 Elphinstone, Mountstuart, 35
 Epstein, Fanny, 95

 Fielding, John, 43
 Florey, Margaret, 146
 Forbes, A. K., 58
 Forbes, James, 58
 Forster, E. M., 97

 Freud, Sigmund, 51, 52, 118
 Freedman, H. I., 146
 Freeman Dyson, 134

 Gaikwad, Laxman, 155
 Gālib, Mirzā, 64
 Gallagher, John, 39
 Gandhi, Mahatma, 4, 37, 38
 Garhwali, 154
 Ghazni, Mahmud of, 67, 68, 72, 79
 Ghose, Mono Mohan 114
 Gide, Andre, 24
 Gillespie, T., 147
 Giwān, Molla, 64
 Goḍbole, Paraśurām Tānyā, 2
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 30
 Gokak, V. K., 107
 Gondi, 154
 Gopāla, 79
 Gorā Kumbhār, 75
 Grierson, Sir George, 4, 58, 148
 Guha, Ranajit, 3
 Gunadhya, 153
 Gunjekar, R. B., 121

 Habitual Offenders' Act, 156
 Halāyudha, 79
 Haḷbe, Laxmanśāstri Moreśwarśāstri,
 121
 Halhed, Nathaniel Brassey, 29, 99
 Haraway, Donna, 135
 Hare, David, 36
 Hariścandra, 73
 Hastings, Warren, 99
 Harkananglekar, M. D., 32
 Hawkins, William, 94, 97
 Hemacandra, Ācārya, 2, 7, 8, 40, 47,
 48, 67, 79, 85
 Hemasaraswati, 40
 Hiriyanṇa, M., 108
 Honāji Bālā, 48, 77
 Hulme, T. E., 118

 Indonesia, 147
 Ingu, Gamaluddin Husain, 64
 Iqbal, Muhammad Hussain, 64

- Iraiyanar, 62
 Itanar, Aiyandar, 62

 Jagannātha, 59, 60, 68, 69
 James, Henry, 104
 Janābai, 75
 Jayadeva, 67
 Jhaveri, Manasukhalal, 11, 43, 44
 Jiarazbhoy, N. A., 148
 Jñānadeva, 7, 43, 67, 68, 76
 Jog, R. S., 45
 Jones, Sir William, 4, 26, 27, 29, 93, 108, 130
 Joshi, Suresh, 13, 14
 Joyce, James, 24

 Kabīr, 40, 42, 43, 60
 Kafka, Franz, 138
 Kakar, Sudhir, 3, 22, 85, 86
 Kalhana, 85
 Kaleshwari in Panchmahals, 158
 Kālidāsa, 26, 30, 73
 Kamil, Amin, 40
 Kanekar, Anant, 12
 Kant, Immanuel, 14, 107, 118
 Kantak, V. Y., 19, 20
 Kelkar, Ashok, 68
 Ketkar, S. V., 47, 48
 Khakhar, Bhupen, 137
 Khedia Sabar, 156
 Khilji, Ala-ud-din, 87
 Khosrau, Amir, 41, 64, 65, 67
 Kidder, Robert, 100
 Kieman, V. G., 29
 Kinnauri, 154
 Koestler, Arthur, 30
 Kolte, V. B., 46
 Kolatkar, Arun, 42
 Koti, 152
 Krieger, Murrey, 15
 Krishna Chaitanya, 45
 Krishna Rayan, 14, 19, 28, 45, 107
 Krishnamoorthy, K., 28, 45
 Kṛṣṇa, Lord, 85, 86, 87, 88
 Kṣemendra, 67
 Kshirsagar, S. K., 45

 Kukna, Bhili, 154
 Kulkarni, W. L., 45
 Kundakunda, 84
 Kuntaka, 67, 68, 71
 Kuṇṭe, Mahādev Moreśvar, 2

 Lallūji Lāl, 53, 54
 Lamb, Charles, 105
 Lane, Richard, 136
 Langer, Susan, 25
 Lawrence, Lord, 9
 Leavis, F. R., 103, 104, 105
 Lukanovic, Sonja Nova, 145

 Macaulay, Lord Thomas Babington, 11, 39, 33, 34, 36, 38, 53
 Madhusūdan Saraswati, 88
 Mahimbhaṭṭa, 67
 Mane, Laxman, 155
 Mammaṭa, 67, 83
 Mandal Commission, 136
 Mangaḷa, 79
 Mankad, Dolar-ray, 45
 Mann, Thomas, 24, 29
 Marathe, K. B., 11, 15
 Mardhekar, B. S., 14, 32, 33, 107, 117, 118, 119
 Master Tarasing, 150
 Mātanga, 78, 148
 Mate, S. M., 47, 48
Maujila Manilal, 137
 Mayhew, Arthur, 34, 96, 97
 McMahon, April, 146
 Mehta, Chandrakant, 46
 Mehta, Nandakiśor, 40
 Mehta, Narasiṃh, 42, 58
 Mehta, Naushil, 138
 Meierkord, Christiane, 145
 Mendelsohn, Oliver, 100
 Meredith, George, 24, 107
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 14
 Mhaibhaṭa, 7
 Mill, James, 24, 25, 93, 94
 Milton, John, 23, 57
 Mīrā, 42, 43, 60, 80, 85
 Misra, Govindanārayaṇa, 40

- Mizo, 154
 Mohanty, Gopinath, 153
 Mookherjee, R. K., 34
 Moropant (Tambe), 48, 77
 Mosley, Christopher, 146
 Mukherjee, Meenakshi, 3
 Mukherjee, Sujit, 130
 Mukteśvar, 60
 Muktibodh, Gajanan Mahadev, 42
 Mukundarāja, 41, 77, 78
 Müller, Max, 29
 Munro, Sir Thomas, 35

 Nāgavarmā, 63
 Nagendra, 14
 Naipaul, V. S., 58
 Nakamura, Shuji, 134
 Nakkīrār, 62
 Nāmadeva, 42, 75, 77, 80, 86
 Nānak, Guru, 41, 42, 91
 Nandi, S. K., 102
 Nandy, Ashis, 3, 26, 37, 95, 98, 130
 Narasimhaiah, C. D., 32
 Nārāyaṇ Bhaṭṭa, 41
 Narayan's *Kocharethi*, 154
 Narmad, 44
 Navalrām, 2
 Nemade, Bhalchandra, 3, 11, 14, 39, 120, 121, 122, 123
 Netungati, T. M. Appu, 40
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 106
 Nizam's state, 155
 Nrpatunga, 63, 67

 Ocean of Stories or Katha-saritasagar, 153

 Pādalipta, 79
 Padmanji, Bābā, 41, 121
 Pala, 80
 Plato, 19, 26, 106, 107, 112
 Palyakirti, 73
 Panikkar, K. M., 32
 Pāṇini, 7, 73, 89, 90
 Parekh, Nagindas, 45
 Parikh, Rasiklal, 45

 Patañjali, 7
 Patankar, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 56, 88
 Peshwā Rāghobādādā, 36
 Pingāla, 73
 Pratihāra, 80
 Premānand, 60
 Ptolemy, 106
 Punde, Dattatraya, 47

 Rāhulaka, 79
 Rājasekhara, 7, 63, 69, 72, 73, 123
 Rajawade, V. K., 11
 Rāma, Lord, 86
 Rāmdās, Samartha, 47, 60, 77, 86, 90
 Ramanujan, A. K., 42
 Rao, Gulbaṇi Venkaṭa, 40
 Rasal, Sudhir, 12
 Rāṣṭrakūta, 80
 Ravivarmā, Rājā, 54
 Read, Herbert, 118
 Renou, Louis, 83
 Richards, I. A., 118
 Riggs, Fred, 110
 Risley, Sir Herbert, 150
 Roe, Sir Thomas, 94
 Rowlatt, 32
 Roy, M. N., 4
 Roy, Rammohun, 36, 37, 96
 Rudraṭa, 63, 73
 Rukmiṇi, 86
 Rupa Goswāmi, 64, 87, 88
 Ruskin, John, 32, 94
 Russell, Bertrand, 117, 118
 Ruyyaka, 67

 Said, Edward, 29
 Śakuntalā, 26, 27
sahacharya, 137
Sāmkhya, 30, 84, 85
 Saṃvatā Mālī, 75
 Sangharakkhita, 62, 63, 67
 Śankara, 8, 74, 82, 83, 85, 90
 Sant Fatehsingh, 150
 Saraladāsa, 41
 Sardar, G. B., 46, 48
 Sarsar, Ratan-nāth, 41

- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 14
 Sātavāhana, 79
 Schwartzberg, Joseph E., 150
 Scott, Sir Walter, 11, 105
 Seal, Anil, 3, 39
 Seal, Brajendranath, 102
 Senā Nhāvi, 75
 Senāpati Fakir Mohan, 41
 Shahjehan, 60
 Shakespeare, William, 43
 Shelley, Mary, 135
 Shelley, P. B., 104, 112, 115
 Shils, Edward, 18
 Śīlānka, 79
 Simon, Joan, 103
 Singer, Milton, 18, 28
 Spear, Sir Percival, 38
 Spinoza, 103
 Spriggs, Mathew, 146, 147
 Srikanthaiah, B. M., 63
 Srinivas, M. N., 3, 18, 31, 49, 54, 55
 Srivijayā, 63
 Stapledon, Olaf, 134
 Sudraka, 27
 Surānanda, 73
 Sūrdās, 42
 Śyāmadeva, 73
 Tagore, Abanindranath, 102
 Tagore, Rabindranath, 54, 102, 112
 Thapar, Romila, 3
 Tennyson, Lord Alfred, 32
 Tripāṭhi, Govardhanrām, 2, 44
 Tughlaq, Muḥammad-bin, 75
 Tukārām, 42, 43, 47, 48, 59, 60, 86
 Tulpule, S. G., 46
 Tulsidās, 60, 86
 Turis, 157
 Tyāgarāja, 43
 Udbhāṭa, 68
 Udukhala, 79
 UNESCO, 139, 146
 Vadis, 157
 Vāgbhaṭa, 67
 Vakpatirāja, 73
 Vāmana, 63, 68, 73
 Vararuci, 7, 73
 Vidyādhara, 67
 Vidyāpati, 80
 Vir Singh, Bhai, 41
 Vispadas, 157
 Viśvanātha, 45, 67, 71, 78
 Viṭṭhal (Viṭhobā), 85, 86
 Vyāsa, 7, 74
 Walimbe, R. S., 45
 Wāris Shah, 60
 Weber, Albrecht, 4
 Weber, Max, 37, 70, 107
 Wertheimer, 107
 Wilde, Oscar, 112
 Willis, William S. (Jr.), 108
 Wilson, Rev. J., 36
 Winternitz, Maurice, 4
 Wolf, Maryanne, 145
 Wurn, Stephen, 146
 Yeats, W. B., 130, 131
 Yokoyama, 107